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THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

THE SPIRIT OF PLACE IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN INDIAN POETRY

A DISSERTATION

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

NORMA JEAN CLARK WILSON

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THE SPIRIT OF PLACE IN CONTEMPORARY

AMERICAN INDIAN POETRY

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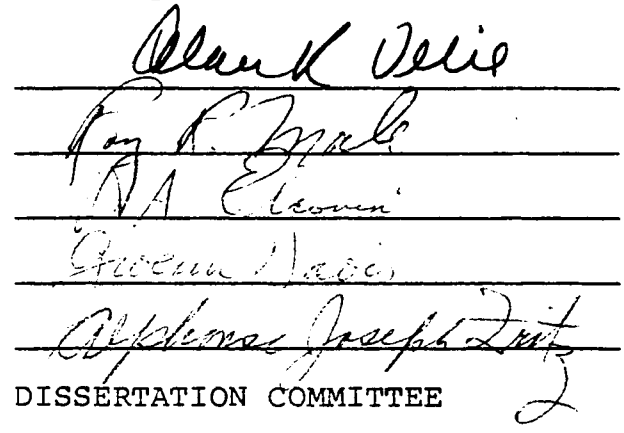

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

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CHAPTER I

THE SPIRIT OF PLACE

Legends, songs, chants and oratory were integral in the lives of people in the various original nations of what is now the United States. This oral literature grew out of knowledge, love and respect for this land, and it has provided a background and model for the literature that is emerging in what might be termed a renaissance in American Indian literature. This literary renaissance coincides with a social renaissance. Like many other ethnic minorities in the United States, American Indians are struggling to gain control of their lives. For American Indians, self determination means gaining control of the land and resources they need for survival and preserving and developing their traditions and cultures. Since Indian nations are not completely separate from, but related socially, culturally and economically to all the peoples now living on this continent and on this planet, their struggle is not an isolated struggle, important to them alone. Such a struggle is essential to

the freedom and future of all people. In terms of literature and its meaning, the at-oneness of a person and a people with the land is a pervasive theme of contemporary American Indian poetry; and this spirit of place is an outgrowth of culture, tradition and life, from which the oral literature of American Indians cannot be separated.

The old stories, songs and chants become part of an outlook. The people see the truth of their traditional literature affirmed in their lives. The oral literature becomes merged with the imaginations of American Indians; so that when references to traditional literature appear in contemporary literature by American Indians, the references are more the result of associations that the mind makes naturally than attempts to point out the importance of the oral literature as a source. By continuing the communication of the old literature, the contemporary writer participates in the oral tradition, drawing from memory words that have meant much to his or her own life, and sharing them. Since the traditional oral literature is a part of the outlook of American Indians, it is a part of the people's and the poets' identities.[1]

The oral literature has grown out of the ways American Indians have defined themselves in relation to the land. It is their expression of what it means to live in their environment. The various tribes had songs to go along with every aspect of their lives--hunting, planting, grinding corn,

healing, making pottery, loving, making war. Considering the psychological reasons for and the effects of singing, one can come to some understanding of what these songs meant in people's lives.

The view of the oral literature is shamanistic. To the shaman, all is one and all is many. All life is related. Gary Snyder explains the view in his book, The Old Ways:

> The philosopher, poet, and yogin all three have standing not too far behind them the shaman; with his or her pelt and antlers, or various other guises; songs going back to the Pleistocene and before. The shaman speaks to wild animals, the spirits of plants, the spirits of mountains, of watersheds. He or she sings for them. They sing through him . . . . In the shaman's world, wilderness and the unconscious become analogous; he who knows and is at ease in one, will be at home in the other.[2]

The shamanistic view is illustrated by this Acoma song, translated by Frances Densmore:

> Nicely, nicely, nicely, nicely, there away in the east,
> The rain clouds are caring for the little corn plants
> as a mother takes care of her baby.[3]

The basic simile in the song compares the rain clouds to a human mother. They are alike in that both give nourishment to living things, the corn and the baby. The nourishment is rain, a liquid like the milk of the mother. The brief song shows the singer's feeling of relationship to the life cycle. Such a song expresses an understanding of the life cycle and a participation in it.

The Acoma are desert people, dependent on the short growing season of the desert. The relationship between rain and their sustenance is direct. The theme of the traditional

Acoma song is expressed in the contemporary poetry of Acoma poet, Simon J. Ortiz, in his book Going For The Rain.

Writing of other desert people, the Papago, Ruth Murray Underhill states, "Song was not simply self expression. It was a magic which called upon the powers of Nature and constrained them to man's will."[4] According to Margot Astrov, "Healing songs and songs intended to support the powers of germination and of growth in all their manifestations, fairly outnumber all other songs of the American Indian."[5] "The rain clouds are caring for the little corn plants" is a song of growth and germination. It acknowledges the interdependence of human and non-human elements in the life cycle.

One of the most powerful songs of healing and of the spirit of place in the oral literature is the ninth song of the Yéibichai, the Navajo Night Chant. This is Washington Matthews' translation:

Tségihi
House made of dawn.
House made of evening light.
House made of dark cloud.
House made of male rain.
House made of dark mist.
House made of female rain.
House made of pollen.
House made of grasshoppers.
Dark cloud is at the door.
The trail out of it is dark cloud.
The zigzag lightning stands high upon it.
Male deity!
Your offering I make.
I have prepared a smoke for you.
Restore my feet for me.
Restore my legs for me.

Restore my body for me.
Restore my mind for me.
Restore my voice for me.
This very day take out your spell for me.
Your spell remove for me.
You have taken it away for me.
Far off it has gone.
Happily I recover.
Happily my interior becomes cool.
Happily I go forth.
My interior feeling cool, may I walk.
No longer sore, may I walk.
Impervious to pain, may I walk.
With lively feelings may I walk.
As it used to be long ago, may I walk.
Happily may I walk.
Happily, with abundant dark clouds, may I walk.
Happily, with abundant showers, may I walk.
Happily, with abundant plants, may I walk.
Happily, on a trail of pollen, may I walk.
Happily may I walk.
Being as it used to be long ago, may I walk.
May it be beautiful before me,
May it be beautiful behind me,
May it be beautiful below me,
May it be beautiful above me,
May it be beautiful all around me.
In beauty it is finished.[6]

The ceremony to celebrate dark clouds bringing rain and a restoration of the body is a religious one. The chant is similar to the song previously quoted in that it recognizes the dependence of life on the elements and the interrelatedness of living things. But in its detail and in its form, it is more expansive. The ninth song of the Night Chant celebrates the material and spiritual sustenance that the earth provides. It is an expression of the singer's dependence on the house that is the medium of human existence, the house that is not one, but many different things--dawn/evening, male rain/female rain, pollen/grasshoppers. The purpose of the chant is to bring about healing. It

exemplifies the power of the traditional poetry.

N. Scott Momaday included the Matthews translation of the ninth song of the Night Chant in his novel House Made of Dawn, and the title of the novel is obviously taken from the song. Momaday's novel is a striking example of the powerful presence of traditional elements in contemporary American Indian writing. Thematically, the statements of the ceremonial chant and Momaday's novel are the same. One is healed only after one is able to articulate one's relationship to the earth. The oral literature, for the most part, was meant to have a direct effect on life. Both the words and the music were believed to have the power to bring about results. The literature was not art for art's sake, but art for life's sake.

The characteristics of the traditional songs and chants are characteristics of the contemporary poetry of N. Scott Momaday, Carter Revard, Simon Ortiz, Alonzo Lopez and many other American Indian poets. In their poems, the self appears in relation to the outside world of nature. Their words are meant to have a direct effect on the living world, by supporting the powers of healing, germination and growth.

The influences of traditional oral literature have come directly to poets like Momaday, Leslie Silko, Simon Ortiz and Carter Revard through their immediate tribal experiences. Momaday often mentions the stories told him by his father and by Kiowa elders; and he travels to Carnegie,

Oklahoma each year to participate in the Kiowa Gourd Dance. Silko lives with her Laguna people at their pueblo near Albuquerque and includes their stories in her poetry and fiction. Ortiz has spent most of his life at Acoma, a pueblo on a mesa in New Mexico, and the influence of his people and their life and stories is strong in his poetry. Revard grew up among the Ponca and Osage people in northeastern Oklahoma and periodically returns for ceremonial dances. His poems are full of this Indian experience. However, despite the fact that these poets and others are participating directly in the tribal existence, they do spend a great deal of their time speaking and interacting with English-speaking non-Indians, as do the Kiowa, Laguna, Acoma and Osage People.

Some of the old ways of speaking and living are continuing, but many languages have already disappeared, and more are becoming whispers. Therefore, American Indians themselves are growing increasingly interested in preserving their languages and in preserving their stories and songs in the original languages and in translations. The process of preserving songs, chants, stories and oratory, that was begun by ethnologists and linguists like Frances Densmore, Washington Matthews, Ruth Underhill and Francis La Flesche, is being carried on by contemporary American Indian poets. The oral literature is exerting an influence on non-Indian poets, as well. Much of this interest stems from the fact that the oral literature is deeply rooted in the spirit of place, and

more and more writers are recognizing the oral literature as a source for understanding their own spirit of place.

Besides the fact that American Indian poets have inherited an outlook as a result of the oral literature that is part of their experience, they have also inherited a style of writing. As with all literature, in American Indian poetry, the sound, rhythm, form--all the stylistic characteristics--merge with meaning to create the whole expression.

All oral and written literature is made up of words. And the power of the word is acknowledged in American Indian literature. Astrov says, "The word, indeed is power. It is life, substance, reality. The word lived before earth, sun, or moon came into existence. Whenever the Indian ponders over the mystery of origin, he shows a tendency to ascribe to the word a creative power all its own."[7] This creative power is recognized and made use of in a poem such as "I Am Crying From Thirst." N. Scott Momaday stated this power in his book The Way to Rainy Mountain:

> A word has power in and of itself. It comes from nothing into sound and meaning; it gives origin to all things. By means of words can a man deal with the world on equal terms. And the word is sacred. A man's name is his own; he can keep it or give it away as he likes. Until recent times, the Kiowas would not speak the name of a dead man. To do so would have been disrespectful and dishonest. The dead take their names with them out of the world.[8]

Acknowledgement of such significance in words led to the careful use of them. In oral literature, the word served a purpose. It was not an empty sound. Such care is evident

in the oral literature and in most of the comtemporary poetry of American Indians.

In the introduction to The Way, Shirley Hill Witt writes, "The mark of a traditionalist in speaking is his extreme care in the choice of words he uses, whether it be English or his own language. Linked to the immortality of words is the need to use the precise word needed to express the idea."[9] Witt also points out that synecdoche is a frequent figure of speech among American Indians. The use of synecdoche is apparent in the ninth song of the Night Chant, in which house, a term generally used to mean shelter, is used to represent the whole earth. Stan Steiner calls this characteristic manner of word usage the "dichotomy of simple words and cosmic meanings."[10]

The respect for the power of a word and the careful use of words in the oral tradition led to their exact memorization and transmission. Such memorization was necessary since there were no written words. The word was sacred and alive and was respectfully transmitted. Such a respect for words and their power and such care in word usage is evident in the contemporary poetry.

In addition to this care with word usage, contemporary American Indian poetry reflects other stylistic characteristics of the oral literature. In his Songs of the Tewa, Herbert J. Spinden named the stylistic characteristics of oral American Indian poetry:

> The device of rhyme seems not to have been used by the most cultivated Americans of pre-Columbian times . . . . Nor were there any certain stanza forms except such as were brought about by the repetition of phrases. The outstanding feature of American Indian verse construction comes from parallel phrasing, or, let us say, repetition with an increment, which gives an effect not of rhyming sounds but of rhyming thoughts. Sometimes the ceremonial pattern demands a repetition for each world direction with formal changes involving the color, plant, animal and so forth associated with each station on the circuit.[11]

The stylistic characteristics named by Spinden can be found in the two traditional songs quoted above. There is no rhyme, in the sense of end rhyme, or exactly rhyming syllables. But there are many instances in the poems of rhyming thoughts, parallel phrasing and repetition with an increment (also a characteristic of traditional English ballads). There is repetition of the word "nicely" in Densmore's translation of the Acoma song. There is repetition with an increment and a rhyming thought in "The rain clouds are caring . . . as a mother takes . . . ." A direction, east, is named.

In the ninth song of the Yéibichai the characteristics Spinden named are most obvious. The repetitions of "House made of," "Restore my," "Happily," "May it be beautiful" illustrate repetition with an increment. The rhyming thoughts of the poem often express the balance of opposites. This symmetry is a frequent characteristic of American Indian poetry. "House made of dawn. House made of evening light" and "House made of male rain/ . . ./House made of female rain" illustrate the duality of existence. Contrasting

forces, qualities and ideas are named in the chant to express a unity, in this case, the house of the earth.

The characteristics Spinden identified are simple, but important elements of style in that they provide the means for the poet to express relationships.

The relationship of the oral songs and chants to contemporary American Indian poetry is immediately obvious in poems such as this one by Alonzo Lopez:

I Am Crying From Thirst

I am crying from thirst.
I am singing for rain.
I am dancing for rain.
The sky begins to weep
for it sees me
singing and dancing
on the dry, cracked
earth.[12]

Lopez is a Papago. The Papagos, whose original name meant Bean People, live in the desert of southern Arizona and northwestern Mexico. In the short growing season of the desert, they could sometimes grow no other crop but their native beans. Their chief need was for drinking water. Ruth Underhill wrote of the Papagos, "It was a life stripped to the essentials, unprotected as the animals. There was only one direction in which emotions could find a vent--in song."[13] Lopez's song reflects the essentials, particularly the dependence of the Papago on their short rainy season. The Papago see a direct relationship between their singing and their sustenance. The sky weeps out of concern for the person thirsting, singing and dancing for rain.

Lopez's poem is stylistically similar to oral songs. "I am" is repeated with increments in the first three lines, which are rhyming thoughts. And the poem is balanced. The "sky begins to weep" because of the singing and dancing in the first three lines.

The relationship of the traditional oratory and legends to contemporary poetry by American Indians is not so obvious as that of the traditional songs, since the oratory and legends are spoken less rhythmically and since we differentiate them as prose. However, both oratory and legends have been important influences on contemporary American Indian poetry.

Orators are highly respected among American Indians. Orators such as Chief Joseph, Pontiac, Santana, Red Jacket, Geronimo, and Sitting Bull were great leaders of their people. Shirley Hill Witt has written:

> In their turn, the great speeches become part of the oral tradition. The art lives on. The talent and brilliance of a good orator still evokes respect. But there is a difference between speechmaker and orator. The number of speeches made by Indian speechmakers per year is enormous--and uncountable . . . . But the orator is something apart: a resource, an asset, a credit to his people.[14]

The orator is a spokesperson for the tribe. Thus, the orator must combine a talent for memorization of his or her people's spoken needs with his or her own creative ideas and ability with language. In a sense, the orator is the Indian politician. The historical records of Indian treaties and of all kinds of contacts between Native Americans and Anglo-

Europeans are replete with speeches stating the positions of the various tribes. One of the greatest warriors and leaders was Geronimo, an Apache, who was imprisoned until his death at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. Geronimo spoke these words to S. M. Barrett through interpretor Asa Deklugie. They were included in Geronimo's Story of His Life which was approved by and dedicated to Theodore R. Roosevelt, and they are a plea to President Roosevelt for the Apaches to be allowed to return to their homeland.

> There is a great question between the Apaches and the Government. For twenty years we have been held prisoners of war under a treaty which was made with General Miles, on the part of the United States Government, and myself as the representative of the Apaches. That treaty has not at all times been properly observed by the Government, although at the present time it is being more nearly fulfilled on their part than heretofore. In the treaty with General Miles we agreed to go to a place outside of Arizona and learn to live as the white people do. I think that my people are now capable of living in accordance with the laws of the United States, and we would, of course, like to have the liberty to return to that land which is ours by divine right.
>
> We are now held on Comanche and Kiowa lands, which are not suited to our needs, . . . Our people are decreasing in numbers here, and will continue to decrease unless they are allowed to return to their native land . . . .
>
> There is no climate or soil which, to my mind, is equal to that of Arizona. We could have plenty of good cultivating land, plenty of grass, plenty of timber and plenty of minerals in that land which the Almighty created for the Apaches. It is my land, my home, my fathers' land, to which I now ask to be allowed to return. I want to spend my last days there, and be buried among those mountains. If this could be I might die in peace, feeling that my people, placed in their native homes, would increase in numbers, rather than diminish as at present, and that our name would not become extinct.
>
> I know that if my people were placed in that mountainous region lying around the headwaters of the Gila River in New Mexico they would live in peace and act according to the will of the President. They would be prosperous

> and happy in tilling the soil and learning the civilization of the white men, whom they now respect. Could I but see this accomplished, I think I could forget all the wrongs that I have ever received, and die a contented and happy old man. But we can do nothing in this matter ourselves--we must wait until those in authority choose to act. If this cannot be done during my lifetime--if I must die in bondage--I hope that the remnant of the Apache tribe may, when I am gone, be granted the one privilege which they request--to return to Arizona.[15]

Geronimo's speech echoes an idea that has been expressed time and time again by American Indian leaders, the importance of their homeland to the people's well being. The plea is for a return to the place "which the Almighty created for the Apaches." Geronimo's request was not granted during his lifetime. He died at Fort Sill. But today Apaches live in their native Arizona at the San Carlos reservation, near the headwaters of the Gila River. Geronimo's words were spoken to bring about this return.

Contemporary poet Laurence S. Fallis, who has Cree ancestry, has written a poem, "Geronimo: If I Must Die in Bondage," taking Geronimo's words for his title. In the poem, Fallis imagines Geronimo's words, at his death; and Fallis returns to the home of the Apaches to gain knowledge of the great leader:

Geronimo at the Apache Cemetery: Ft. Sill, Oklahoma (1909)

1. I am gone.
   Let no man
   speak my name.

2. And seek me not in this sad place.

3. For I have gone to the land beyond.
   To the land of the tall cottonwood.

To the land streaked red. To the
world beneath the great sand tepee.
To the place from which no man returns.

4. Fools!

5. Do you think that Geronimo lies
in a prisoner's grave?

6. In the night my people came. To the west
they carried me. My face they painted red.
My ponies they slew. My tents they burned.
In a mountain cave they laid me to rest.
Far away. In a hidden place. Where
no one will ever find me.

7. And what will men say of Geronimo?

8. Drunkard!
Liar!
Thief!
Murderer!

9. 'thoroughly vicious, intractable, treacherous . . . ."

10. But what do they know of 'he
who yawns' - of the sad old
man in a feather bonnet selling
his picture to tourists at the
World's Fair - of Geronimo the
turkey farmer . . . ?

11. Enough.

12. It is finished.

13. I am gone.

14. But my people
live. And my
spirit lives in
them. They will
endure for-ever.

15. Geronimo!

<u>The San Carlos Reservation: December, (1972)</u>

In
the
fog

a
mountain
stream

and
the
thunder

of
your
name:

Geronimo.[16]

The spirit of place is strong in Fallis' poem. We are not to look for Geronimo in the place where he died, a "sad place," where Geronimo was imprisoned, but rather to think of him as having been carried to a mountain cave. Geronimo has gone to "the land beyond." And his name is spoken by the mountain stream; his spirit lives in his people. The poem has a spoken quality. The short, one word exclamations, the rhetorical questions, the parallel phrasing, and the eloquence in Fallis's poem link it to traditional oratory. In poems like "If I Must Die in Bondage," orators have become the subjects of poems; their words have been remembered and made part of contemporary poetry.

A third type of traditional oral literature that has an important relationship to the contemporary poetry is the tribal legend or story. Most contemporary American Indian poets include the stories of their people in their writing. And often the style in which the story is told, as well as the substance of the story, influences the contemporary poet. Since the stories are part of a people's outlook, they keep

reappearing in different forms in the writings of American Indians. The contemporary poet who has made the most extensive use of stories and legends in his writings is N. Scott Momaday. Momaday's book, The Way to Rainy Mountain, published in 1969, is a blending of Kiowa legends, Kiowa history and Momaday's personal recollections related to the legends and history. In chapter two I will discuss relationships between these legends and Momaday's poetry in detail, but here I wish to illustrate the importance of the Kiowa creation story to Momaday's writing in order to illustrate the relationship that may exist between the traditional legend and the contemporary poetry. This is the Kiowa creation story, as Momaday tells it, in The Way to Rainy Mountain:

> You know, everything had to begin, and this is how it was: the Kiowas came one by one into the world through a hollow log. They were many more than now, but not all of them got out. There was a woman whose body was swollen up with child, and she got stuck in the log. After that, no one could get through, and that is why the Kiowas are a small tribe in number. They looked all around and saw the world. It made them glad to see so many things. They called themselves Kwuda, 'coming out.'[17]

Momaday has great respect for the imagination. Elsewhere in The Way to Rainy Mountain, he states, in speaking of Tsoai, or Devil's Tower, "Two centuries ago, because they could not do otherwise, the Kiowas made a legend at the base of the rock."[18] The Kiowas felt the need to explain through a story something about the natural world which made a strong impression on them; and they felt the need to state their relationship to the place and to the universe. Momaday has said

that he conceives of himself as having emerged from a hollow log. The hollow log is a particularly appropriate metaphor to represent the womb. And so, even a logically-minded person can see the connection between the poetical conception and reality. A more thorough consideration of the Kiowa creation story reveals the cosmic meanings it entails. If a people imagine themselves as having originated in such a way, they must see themselves as having emerged from the Earth, as mother. The spirit of place is strong in this story. Human beings are born out of another part of the creation, a hollow log, which was once a living tree, but which is now dead. The people emerge from darkness into light. The Kiowa creation story links the people to the landscape and gives them a feeling of being one with the whole natural world.

The emergence from the hollow log story figures in all of Momaday's writing--the prose (which is highly poetic) and the poetry. The emergence story is part of Momaday's outlook, and it appears in other forms, as in the poem, "Headwaters," which introduces The Way to Rainy Mountain, and which is included in his collections of poetry, Angle of Geese and The Gourd Dancer:

> Noon in the intermountain plain:
> There is scant telling of the marsh--
> A log, hollow and weather-stained,
> An insect at the mouth, and moss-
> Yet waters rise against the roots,
> Stand brimming to the stalks. What moves?
> What moves on this archaic force
> Was wild and welling at the source.[19]

In this short, descriptive poem, one can see similarities in idea and style to the Kiowa creation story. First of all, the central image is the hollow log, something that is in the process of decay. But again, as in the creation story, death is not an end. There are "An insect at the mouth, and moss." The log of the poem is not a part of nature separate from humanity. It has a "mouth." And there is something moving against "this archaic force" that is death. There is water, the life-nourishing substance that always is important in the creation of new life "wild and welling at the source." The Kiowas migrated to the "intermountain plain" in Oklahoma, far from their northwestern home near the Yellowstone River, but there amidst the Wichitas the log remains a symbol of the creation.

Finally, in style, there is the colloquial, "What moves?" Such an expression further links the poem to Momaday's telling of the creation story that begins, "You know, everything had to begin, and this is how it was." The teller is included in the story and in the poem. The poem illustrates the Kiowa's delight in seeing; "It made them glad to see so many things." The detailed description of the log illustrates a delight in seeing that Momaday had, an outlook developed over the years, not unrelated to the Kiowa people and their way of imagining themselves.

The influence of the oral tradition on contemporary American Indian poets is one manifestation of a national

cultural phenomenon. Indians and non-Indians are taking an increased interest in their cultural and family histories. They are looking for their identities in relationship to their tenure on American soil. It is not a new quest. Focusing on American literary history, we are immediately aware that Washington Irving, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry David Thoreau, Emily Dickinson, Walt Whitman, Mark Twain, Henry James, Langston Hughes, William Faulkner, John Steinbeck, Eudora Welty and many others have written out of an understanding of their traditions and places. Of the writers mentioned above, Hawthorne and James felt most keenly a lack of tradition in America. Hawthorne sought to overcome this lack by peopling his fiction with the Puritans. The colonial history of New England provided the nearest thing he could find to a cultural and traditional milieu. James, Hawthorne's literary successor, chose to search Europe for the tradition and culture he thought America lacked. For others, tradition did not depend on the European's stay on American soil so much as on the individual's relationship to the land and its history. Thoreau, Hawthorne's contemporary, did not envy Europe its traditions. He concentrated on knowing well the natural details of the place where he was living and its history before European settlement. More than any writer among his contemporaries, Thoreau was aware that there had been traditions in America for thousands of years and that there were things to be learned from them. He collected

twelve books of observations about American Indian life and read extensively about Indians. His admiration and respect for the native way of life is expressed in many of his books, as in this passage from A Week on the Concord and Merrimac Rivers:

> There are other savager, and more primeval aspects of nature than our poets have sung. It is only white man's poetry. Homer and Ossian can never revive in London or Boston. And yet behold how these cities are refreshed by the mere tradition, or the imperfectly transmitted fragrance of these wild fruits. If we could listen but for an instant to the chant of the Indian muse, we should understand why he will not exchange his savageness for civilization. Nations are not whimsical. Steel and blankets are strong temptations; but the Indian does well to continue Indian.[20]

Thoreau was one of the few writers of his time who attempted to learn about the lives and literature of American Indians, although others like Cooper, Longfellow and Melville included in their writings mythology fabricated by colonists, which was based on their real or imagined experiences with American Indians. Richard Slotkin writes:

> The story of the evolution of an American mythology is, in large measure, the story of our too-slow awakening to the significance of the American Indian in the universal scheme of things generally and in our (or his) American world in particular.[21]

Americans, as a whole, are just beginning to realize this significance, although scores of people in America's past have seen the significance of American Indians to the history of this land. The new interest stems from the need for an identity. Old timers are quick to remind anyone who names Roots as a catalyst of the quest of Americans for their

history that they have been engaged in researching the histories of their counties or their families for a longer time than Haley spent researching and writing his saga. At the same time, Roots is an important and widely known example of what is happening in America today. Americans are realizing that our history has been over simplified and one sided. The white-male American hero is being seen as a mixture of vice and virtue, not as the near-perfect person we were taught he was when we were children. America is growing up. We are learning that such things as the facts that George Washington was a land speculator who held 40,000 acres of land and was "worth" about $530,000, making him probably the richest man in the United States when he died in 1799, are significant to our history.[22] The "father of our country" may have refused the crown, but he was hardly a picture of generosity and self-sacrifice.

People of all races in America are saying that history must include the complex truth about ordinary working people's lives and about the lives of the powerful and famous. Women, Blacks, Chicanos, Asian Americans, American Indians are tired of being stereotyped or ignored. They want to read about themselves in their diversity and complexity. White, male American heroes such as George Washington and John F. Kennedy were important and powerful figures in American history, but they are hardly representative of the diverse history of America. Historians have focused on the

Washingtons and Kennedys of American history, too often excluding the workers, women and ethnic peoples whose accomplishments and struggles are the most important manifestations of democracy in America.

Contemporary American Indian poets Wendy Rose and Carter Revard are among those including history in their writings. In their poetry, history is more than data stripped of emotion. They write with emotion and understanding, from a point of view that has seldom been presented in history books and museums. This is Wendy Rose's poem in response to the massacre at Wounded Knee:

> I expected my skin and my blood
> to ripen, not be ripped from my bones;
> like fallen fruit I am peeled, tasted,
> discarded; my seeds open and
> have no future. No there has been
> no past.
> My own body gave up the beads,
> my own hands gave the babies away
> to be strung on bayonets, to be counted
> one by one like rosary stones and
> then tossed to the side of life as if
> the pain of their borning
> had never been.
>
> My feet were frozen to the leather,
> pried apart, left behind--bits
> of flesh on the moccasins,
> bits of papery deerhide on the bones
> My back was stripped of its cover,
> its quilling intact; was torn,
> was taken away, was restored.
> My leggings were taken
> like in a rape
> and shriveled to the size
> of stick figures
> like they had never felt the push
> of my strong woman's body
> walking in the hills.

It was my own baby whose
cradleboard I held.
Would've put her in my mouth like a snake
if I could, would've turned her
into a bush or old rock if
there'd been magic enough
to work such changes.
Not enough magic even to stop the bullets.
Not enough magic
to stop the scientists;
not enough magic
to stop the collectors.

Now
the ghost dances
impervious
to bullets.[23]

Wendy Rose writes from the persona of one of the women slaughtered there in the snow in the winter of 1890. The people were stripped of their clothing by a burial party that went to Wounded Knee four days after the massacre. The only things kept were the moccasins, the leggings, the shirts, the things that would bring money at auction. The people's bodies were thrown into a trench. The horror of the massacre and burial are evident in the woman's words. But the poem does not end in despair. For through her poem, Rose allows the ghost of the dead woman to speak. Bullets cannot destroy the truth. And the truth revealed in words has power.

In his poem "Discovery of the New World," Carter Revard writes from the persona of a creature from outer space:

The creatures that we met this morning
marveled at our green skins
and scarlet eyes.
They lack antennae
and can't be made to grasp
your proclamation that they are
our lawful food and prey and slaves,

nor can they seem to learn
their body-space is needed to materialize
our oxygen absorbers--
which they conceive are breathing
and thinking creatures whom they implore
at first as angels or (later) as devils
when they are being snuffed out
by an absorber swelling
into their space.
Their history bled from one this morning
while we were tasting his brain
in holographic rainbows
which we assembled into quite an interesting
set of legends--
that's all it came to, though
the colors were quite lovely before we
poured them into our time;
the blue shift bleached away
meaningless circumstance and they would not fit
any of our truth-matrices--
there was, however,
a curious visual echo in their history
of our own coming to their earth;
a certain General Sherman
had said concerning a group of them
exactly what we were saying to you
about these creatures:
it is our destiny to asterize this planet,
and they will not be asterized,
so they must be wiped out.
We need their space and oxygen
which they do not know how to use,
yet they will not give up their gas unforced,
and we feel sure,
whatever our "agreements" made this morning,
we'll have to kill them all:
the more we cook this orbit,
the fewer next time round
We've finished burning all their crops
and killed their cattle.
They'll have to come into our pens
and then we'll get to study
the way our heart attacks and cancers spread among them,
since they seem not immune to these.
If we didn't have this mission it might be sad
to see such helpless creatures die,
but never fear,
the riches of this place are ours
and worth whatever pain others may have to feel.
We'll soon have it cleared
as in fact it is already, at the poles
Then we will be safe, and rich, and happy here forever.[24]

Revard's science fiction poem is really about the historical genocidal policy of the U.S. government in its treatment of the indigenous peoples of this land. Revard exposes the concept of manifest destiny for what it is--the imposition of a culture and the attempted annihilation of the cultures that have lived on this continent for perhaps thirty thousand years. By using the mode of science fiction, Revard puts the reader in the position of victim, whether she or he is Indian or not; and thus, the reader is in the position of feeling what it is like to be a "helpless creature" exterminated by another group of creatures, who are superior only in their technological capabilities. The persona of the poem is only interested in the land that can be cleared. No attempt will be made to conform to the place, the Earth; rather the green creatures with scarlet eyes will make the land conform to them. And this conformity will be achieved by destroying every living thing on the planet. An exaggeration of history? Of course; that is the method of satirical science fiction. But the poem does, through this exaggeration, powerfully illustrate the process by which much of the land has been stripped of its original fruitfulness and by which many of its original inhabitants have been killed off. The green creatures from outer space have no sense of place. They are foreign to the planet. They cannot understand how the indigenous peoples of the Earth feel about their home. And they do not attempt to. They are physically stronger

(because they are technologically more sophisticated); so they have the power to subjugate. They consider themselves superior to the Earth creatures and see no reason to treat the "helpless creatures" with respect.

It is a profound irony and tragedy for this continent that the founders of the United States of America did not treat the Native Americans with respect, seeking their insight as to how to live in harmony with the land as the indigenous peoples had. In They came here first, D'Arcy McNickle quotes a Hopi spokesman who expressed this irony well:

> 'When the Hopi people came from under the world, they found people living in this land before them. These people had been living here a long time, and they knew many things and the right way to live. Our Hopi people went to them and said, "We would like to live here with you." They replied, "All right. You can stay here. We have certain rules here, ways of living, and you will have to follow these rules. Then there will be no trouble." That's how it was. The Hopis did as they were told and they never had trouble. After a while the white men came. They did not ask if they could live with us. They just moved in. They did not ask what our rules were; instead they wrote rules for us to follow.'[25]

The first relations between English settlers in Massachusetts and the neighboring Indians were peaceful. During the colonists' first winter at Plymouth, Squanto, a Wampanoag, and other Indians in the area shared corn with the colonists, helped them from tribal stores and showed them how to catch fish. The following spring the Indians showed them how to plant and cultivate corn.

Peace continued for several years, until thousands of settlers began arriving from Europe and pushing the Indians back into the wilderness.[26] As more and more settlers arrived, they treated the Indians with less and less respect. The Indians had kept the first Plymouth settlers from starving, but once the settlers had more supplies and were greater in numbers, they no longer felt the need for the Indians' help.

American Indians had never conceived of owning the land on which they lived. They considered the land as part of the Creation, their Mother; and their existence was inseparable from her. They were responsible to the Earth to respect and not destroy her.

The tribal nations were forced into contact with people who had no personal physical or spiritual investment in the land, but who wished to profit from exploitation of the resources of the land. The speculators viewed the land as a commodity that they could own. From this basic difference in perspective arose the basic and continuing conflict between the Native Americans and the Anglo-Europeans.

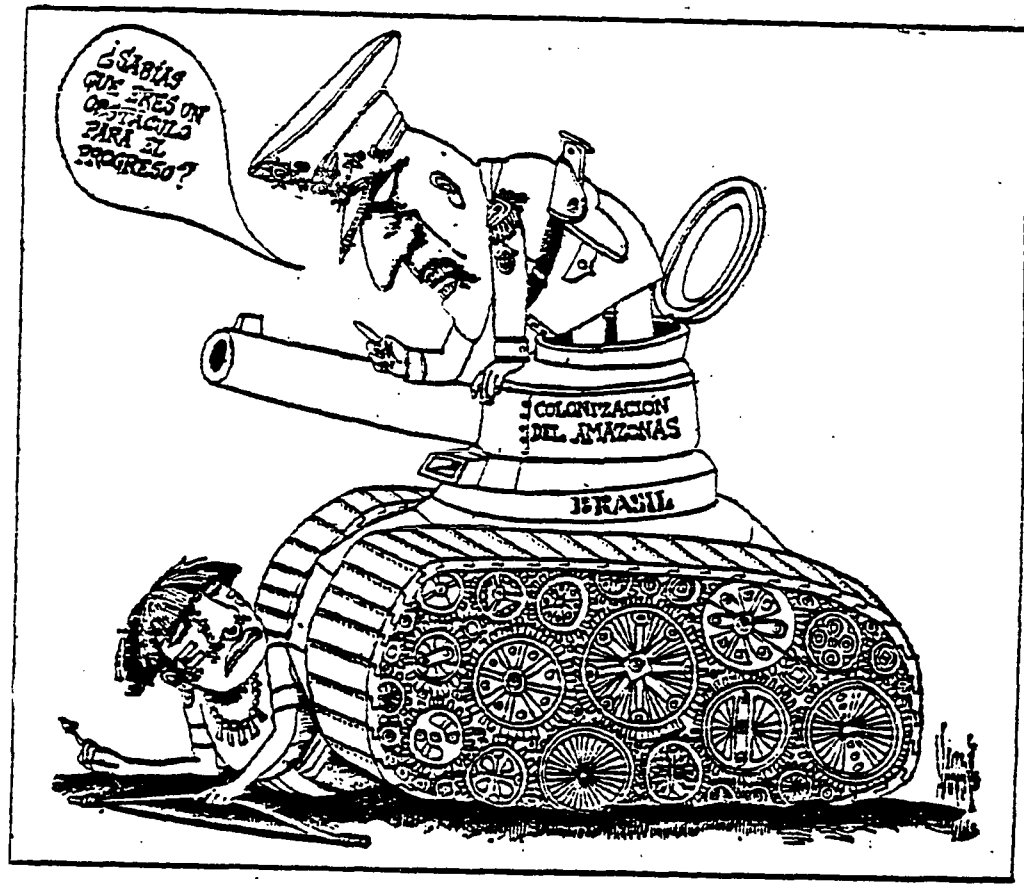
In his Studies in Classic American Literature, D. H. Lawrence wrote of the Spirit of Place in America:

> A curious thing about the Spirit of Place is the fact that no place exerts its full influence upon a new-comer until the old inhabitant is dead or absorbed. So America. While the Red Indian existed in fairly large numbers, the new colonials were in a great measure immune from the daimon, or demon, of America. The moment the last nuclei of Red life break up in America, then the

> white men will have to reckon with the full force of the demon of the continent. At present the demon of place and the unappeased ghosts of the dead Indians act within the unconscious or under-conscious soul of the white American, causing the great American grouch, the Orestes-like frenzy of restlessness in the Yankee soul, the inner malaise which amounts almost to madness sometimes. The Mexican is macabre and disintegrated in his own way. Up till now, the unexpressed spirit of America has worked covertly in the American, the white American soul. But within the present generation the surviving Red Indians are due to merge in the great white swamp. Then the Daimon of America will work overtly, and we shall see real changes.[27]

Lawrence's prophecy is all the more interesting because it has not come true. Red Indians have not all merged in the "great white swamp." The Daimon of America has continued and continues to work overtly, especially in the contemporary writing of American Indians. In the passage, Lawrence almost seems to hope that American Indians will die or be absorbed soon, so that the white man can get on with letting the spirit work. Although Lawrence could hardly be called an advocate of Manifest Destiny, his ideas about the Spirit of Place complement the imperialist philosophy that will not allow a few "savages" to stand in the way of "Progress."

Genocide has been rampant; war, displacement, disease and poverty have diminished the number of Native Americans to the extent that they now number only one tenth of the ten million there were before colonization began; but Indians have resisted. The cartoon which follows, appeared in the Early Spring, 1977 issue of Akwesasne Notes, a newspaper published by the Mohawk Nation. Today transnational corporations, many of them based in the U.S., such as Gulf,



"Are you aware that you are an obstacle to progress?"

Naranjo/Excelsior

Texaco, U.S. Steel, Alcan Aluminum and Rio Tinto Zinc are extending their tentacles into the Amazon Basin of South America, forcing the indigenous peoples who have lived there for thousands of years to assimilate or die. As far as the corporations are concerned, the Indians of South America are standing in the way of pro/fits/gress.

This present-day manifestation of imperialism via transnational corporations has a long historical precedent. The general practice of Spain, Portugal, England and France had been to turn "discovered" lands over to private

enterprise under a charter or license, without protecting the indigenous peoples from exploitation.

It is no wonder that Lawrence predicted the disappearance of the Red Indian, in light of the assaults American Indians have been forced to resist, against their lands and against themselves. But in his statement about the Spirit of Place, Lawrence's logic is holey. There is no reason to assume that the presence of people who have knowledge of the spirit of a place must preclude other people from coming to an awareness of the spirit of place. It seems to me that the reverse is true, for if there are among us people who have an understanding of their identity with relationship to this land, nurtured by their long tenure here, then we have examples to follow. We learn from them that we too can have an investment in the landscape, an understanding of our place on this continent and in the universe. This idea has been well articulated by N. Scott Momaday (interview videotaped in the studios of KUAT-TV, Tucson, November 1, 1974):

> M. One of the things that distinguishes the American Indian oral tradition, and I suspect this is true of many--if not all--oral traditions, is the understanding of the landscape. Man's understanding, man both as a race and as an individual, his understanding of the physical world in which he lives. I think that's very important in an oral tradition especially. Man understands himself in relation to the tree over here and the mountain over here and the river and naturally operates immediately out of it. It qualifies his language in innumerable ways. And I think that this is basically a moral kind of relationship. In the Indian world it is almost irrefutably. Man understands that he is obligated in certain ways to the landscape, that he is responsible for it, that he

shares in the spirit of place. That's a very important concept, I think. It has been important to me personally. I have written out of that understanding.

Q. Is this sense of place, this spirit of place, tied to genetics, tied to Indianness?

M. I don't think it's bound to it. I don't think that this sense of place is unavailable to people who have no aboriginal experience of landscape. But it certainly makes a difference that the Indian has lived in the landscape of North America for perhaps thirty thousand years. That means something. It has to qualify his understanding of himself. He thinks of the land in that way, according to that tenure somehow. And it's more difficult for people whose experience is not so deep to relate closely, to understand that dimension, that relationship between man and the landscape. I talk to any number of my students at Stanford, for example, and they are deeply interested in that, in finding out about their investment in the landscape. It becomes a very exciting prospect for them.[28]

In the introduction to their contemporary anthology, Southwest, Karl and Jane Kopp say, "To embody a pre-European, or even a mythological 'sense of place' is in fact one aim of the new writing. The attempt by many writers to absorb a vision of 'place' commonly associated with that of the American Indian is an obvious feature of this aim."[29]

In my own life and in the writing that has developed from it, I have felt this need to come to an understanding of the place where I live and to write out of that understanding. Perhaps because I live in the southwest, and have come to identify with this place, my attention has been drawn to the contemporary writers of this region. As I consider my place in the universe, I realize my effect on the natural order and how I am in turn affected by nature. And as I

feel the natural order increasingly disturbed, I feel the need to help assert the importance of clean air and water and an uncontaminated landscape.

I agree with the editors of Southwest that "The best of the new 'place' writing exists west of the Mississippi."[30] This is perhaps because the other areas of the country have grown writers for a longer time. Often the eastern and southern writers look to a written literary tradition, rather than to their place and spoken literature as a source. Of course, some of the best recent "place" writing in the United States has come from the South. William Faulkner, Carson McCullers, Flannery O'Connor, Eudora Welty and James Dickey have written with intense awareness of their southern landscapes. But they have written mainly of a decadent white society. Southwest writing has a freshness and contains an awareness of place that has been far less exposed to "civilizing" influences than the writing of the South. The contemporary poets who seem to me to best embody the Spirit of Place in their writing are all from the Southwest--N. Scott Momaday, Simon J. Ortiz and Carter Revard. They are all American Indians.

Both Momaday and Revard are scholars and teachers of language and literature in major universities. Both have extensive knowledge of British and American literature and their poetic traditions. Revard's major field is Medieval British literature. Momaday's is 19th century American

literature. While they have been influenced by their studies in British and American literature, they have also taught American Indian Literature; and their Native American upbringing and traditions are the major foundations of their poetry.

Simon J. Ortiz has been less influenced by British and American literature than have Revard and Momaday. He has lived most of his life at Acu, a pueblo on a mesa in northern New Mexico. His education in American culture, acquired through his experiences while travelling, is more evident in his poems than book learning. His poems probe philosophical and social questions. He is concerned by a mother's wish to have an abortion; he wants his child to appreciate the good bread his mother makes; he expresses the alienation of an alcoholic Indian as he walks through the streets of the city, separated from himself.

The poet cannot find a voice until the poet knows who she/he is. The voice grows out of the person. Looking for the development of a voice and how the voice emerges, one can find out the way the contemporary American Indian poet defines him/herself. That definition grows out of the experience of being a Native American, with all that experience embodies, especially out of a sense of place in the environment. Poets who are American Indians see this land from a unique perspective. They have learned what this land was and how their people understood their identity in relation

to the landscape--waters, mountains, animals, plants--by means of a rich, continuing oral tradition. They are also in a position to see the changes that have come about. Because they are acquainted, through an oral tradition, with a knowledge of what the continent was like before the coming of the Anglo-Europeans, and with the changes that followed, they are able to make particularly incisive statements about the results of the technology and black asphalt that cover so much of America.

The idea of defining themselves in relation to their environment is integral to the lives of American Indians, as it has been integral to the lives of people in all cultures. It is related to the reason for the making of myths or stories to explain the meaning of life, since myth emerges out of the process of examining a people's relation to their environment. American Indian poets see themselves as part of a continuum. Consequently, their minds are directed toward the history and culture of their people and toward the environment in which they live. Their minds are directed outward, rather than merely turning inward for self analysis. They look out, at what they see, at the landscape, for their insights. They consider the dialectical relationship between their inner feelings and their surroundings. Seeing oneself as not alone, but as a living part of a land and a people, leads to a feeling of responsibility, to an awareness of the reciprocal interaction between oneself and all else in one's

vision.

The Spirit of Place is spiritual. But the Spirit of Place is rooted in the physical, for it recognizes the material conditions of human existence and develops from those conditions. As a plant is rooted in the soil and grows and flourishes according to its compatibility with the nutrients it receives from its environment, so it is with people. The concept of the spirit of place as it is embodied in American Indian poetry contains some essential remedies for the sickness our society is heir to.

CHAPTER II

THE SPIRIT OF PLACE IN THE POETRY OF N. SCOTT MOMADAY

"I existed in that landscape, and then my existence was indivisable with it." N. Scott Momaday, The Names.

In Chapter One I discussed N. Scott Momaday's respect for the power of the imagination. I also looked at the Kiowa creation story and its influence on Momaday's writing as it embodies the spirit of place. In this chapter I will discuss those qualities of his writing in greater detail, pointing out other critical perspectives useful in examining Momaday's poetry.

Momaday's writing is a continuation and development of the oral tradition. In an interview Momaday was asked, "You talk about the living aspect of oral tradition, and it sounds like a lot of energy involved in that is involved with just carrying on the older traditions. Do you see new mythologies being born now? New traditions that will be passed on orally?"

Momaday replied:

> . . . I think there's no reason to believe that myths are not being constructed every day . . . . one of the things that happens within the oral tradition is the

> matter of appropriation. That's a word that I have come to think about a lot in relation to the oral tradition . . . . In the oral tradition one appropriates things to his experience. This is the business of being a human being. And the only way we can express that idea of appropriation, of course, is through language . . . . I think myths are appropriated to our experience, myths from the long distant past, but we also appropriate things that happen to us in our daily lives, very immediate things. In the oral tradition these recent appropriations have a way of becoming merged with the whole of our experience. It is a process of renewal . . . .[1]

In this statement, Momaday explains how old stories or myths become part of a person's outlook and how that outlook is extended through new experiences which are expressed in language and which become new myths. Thus, the oral tradition is being constantly renewed. Much of Momaday's poetry exemplifies the process of the appropriation of the oral tradition to his personal experience. This appropriation is the key consideration in understanding Momaday's poetry. However, in order to fairly and completely assess Momeday's poetry, one must consider the non-American Indian influences which have had a role in shaping some of his poems.

As illustrated in Chapter One, Momaday's poetry is obviously linked to the oral tradition by the reappearance of stories, such as the Kiowa creation story, as well as by ideas, perceptions and stylistic qualities that are essentially Native American. Another way in which his poems are obviously linked to the oral tradition is that they sound good when read aloud. A poem's sound is always important. As Yvor Winters, Momaday's major professor when he was a

graduate student at Stanford, wrote, " . . . the mind's ear can be trained only by way of the other [human ear], and the matter, practically considered, comes inescapably back to the reading of poetry aloud."[2] Doubtless, Winters' attitude had some influence on Momaday's attention to the sound of his poetry. When I heard Momaday read his poems, February 1, 1977 at the University of Oklahoma, I noticed his careful elocution and the non-dramatic way he read as the manner Winters had prescribed in The Function of Criticism. But Winters' emphasis on sound was not entirely new to Momaday. It only served to reinforce what Momaday had already learned through hearing the spoken literature of his people.

In a discussion Momaday was asked, "Can you use the written language to continue or develop the oral tradition?" Momaday answered:

> Yes, as we come to understand them [oral and written literature] and their relationship, writing will come closer to the oral tradition and will be more honest. Writing tempts us to be dishonest. It gives us a sense of false security. You should be shaky and frightened in the presence of language when you remember the risks. The same things that inform the oral tradition ought to inform writing.[3]

Momaday's answer indicates his respect for the oral tradition and the spoken language. He feels that people are more likely to be honest when speaking than when writing. He seeks to write as if his words were spoken aloud. Such an attempt results in poetry that has clarity and a pleasing sound.

Momaday began writing as an undergraduate at the University of New Mexico. "Earth and I Gave You Turquoise," his first published poem, appeared in the New Mexico Quarterly in 1958:

> Earth and I gave you turquoise
> when you walked singing
> We lived laughing in my house
> and told old stories
> You grew ill when the owl cried
> We will meet on Black Mountain
>
> I will bring corn for planting
> and we will make fire
> Children will come to your breast
> You will heal my heart
> I speak your name many times
> The wild cane remembers you
>
> My young brother's house is filled
> I go there to sing
> We have not spoken of you
> but our songs are sad
> When Moon Woman goes to you
> I will follow her white way
>
> Tonight they dance near Chinle
> by the seven elms
> There your loom whispered beauty
> They will eat mutton
> and drink coffee till morning
> You and I will not be there
>
> I saw a crow by Red Rock
> standing on one leg
> It was the black of your hair
> The years are heavy
> I will ride the swiftest horse
> You will hear the drumming hooves[4]

The poem reflects Momaday's closeness to the Navajo people and their home. Momaday started school at Chinle, on the Navajo Reservation in New Mexico. Having grown up among the Navajo people, Momaday came to have great respect for them. The narrator of "Earth and I Gave You Turquoise" is a Navajo

who defines his existence in terms of the landscape surrounding him--Black Mountain, Chinle, Red Rock. Momaday has imagined how a Navajo man would feel after the death of the woman he loved. The poem is an elegaic apostrophe.

Made up of a series of short statements, which form five six-line stanzas, the poem has a chant-like sound when read aloud. The rhythm and the syllabic regularity accentuate the seriousness of the expression of love and longing.

The narrator, a Navajo, is expressing an understanding and appreciation of his dead wife's relationship to nature, not just to him. The woman was a creative force in the world. Her man values her wholeness, her creativity and her closeness to nature. He never says the abstract "I love you" in his poem to her, but rather describes what the woman did when she was alive: "There your loom whispered beauty."

"Earth and I Gave You Turquoise" combines an appreciation of life with a recognition of death. The man has grown lonely for the woman who was so present and so creative in his tangible world. The man feels pain at her loss. The emotion in this poem is not a celebration of the man's grief, but rather an expression of it.

The last three lines of the poem might be considered a death wish. The man determines to "ride the swiftest horse" to join the woman who has died. But earlier, in stanza two, the man has spoken of their future meeting. And he thinks of that meeting not in words about death, but rather in

words about life.

> I will bring corn for planting
> and we will make fire
> Children will come to your breast
> You will heal my heart

The man's sorrow is to be healed by his becoming again a part of the life cycle of the earth, even in death. The woman has already gone into that realm of existence. The man who loves her is ready to enter the same realm. Death, as he sees it, is a new beginning. It is a planting of seed and an entering into the reproductive force of the Earth Mother.

As writer, Momaday creates characters who, like the Navajo narrator of "Earth and I Gave You Turquoise," articulate their spirit of place. The poem is written in colloquial English, and it is representative of the major body of Momaday's work as it is in the American Indian tradition and as it embodies the spirit of place. But not all of Momaday's poetry is so distinctly American Indian.

Many of the poems in Angle of Geese might be labelled post-Symbolist. In post-Symbolist poetry, sensory details are presented along with philosophical ideas. While post-Symbolist like Symbolist poetry is filled with sensory details, post-Symbolist poetry differs from Symbolist poetry by being more rational. While the Symbolist attempts to isolate the sensory detail from rational meaning, the post-Symbolist attempts to charge the sensory details with meaning.[5] Momaday's post-Symbolist poems, which were influenced

by Yvor Winters, usually contain subjects or imagery from the natural world, but their purpose is more to express an abstract philosophical idea in imagery than to allow the natural phenomenon to speak symbolically, by virtue of its existence in the life cycle. Often the spirit of place in the post-Symbolist poems is obscured by the use of abstract, rather than concrete diction, and by the stylistic rigidity of English poetry, rather than the stylistic freedom of American Indian poetry.

Another non-Indian influence on Momaday's poetry is the poetry of Frederick Goddard Tuckerman. For his doctoral dissertation, Momaday edited The Complete Poems of Frederick Goddard Tuckerman. In his introduction to the poems, Momaday wrote:

> His poems are remarkable, point-blank descriptions of nature; they are filled with small, precise, and whole things: purring bees and vervain spikes, shives and amaryllis, wind flowers and stramony. But Tuckerman has more to recommend him than an eye and a nomenclature. His sensibilities are refined; his sensitivity is acute. His experience is pervaded by an always apparent sense of grief. He knows well the side of Man that is most vulnerable to pain, and he treats of it [sic] throughout his work with respect and compassion, often with great power and beauty.[6]

Many of the characteristics which Momaday identified in Tuckerman's poetry are characteristics of Momaday's poetry as well. It seems only natural that the editing process would have influenced Momaday. The similarities seem most obvious in some of the poems in Angle of Geese, Momaday's first book of poetry. "The Bear" exemplifies the characteristics

Momaday admired in Tuckerman's poems:

> What ruse of vision
> escarping the wall of leaves,
> rending incision
> into countless surfaces,
>
> would cull and color
> his somnolence, whose old age
> has outworn valor,
> all but the fact of courage?
>
> Seen, he does not come,
> move, but seems forever there,
> dimensionless, dumb,
> in the windless noon's hot glare.
>
> More scarred than others
> these years since the trap maimed him,
> pain slants his withers,
> drawing up the crooked limb.
>
> Then he is gone, whole,
> without urgency, from sight,
> as buzzards control,
> imperceptibly, their flight. (p. 5)

The motion of the Bear as he cuts through the forest is described in stanza one. Sensory details, such as "in the windless noon's hot glare," "pain slants his withers,/ drawing up the crooked limb" and "buzzards control,/imperceptibly, their flight," illustrate that Momaday is describing observed details. These are "point-blank descriptions of nature."

The refinement of Momaday's sensibilities and his acute sensitivity are shown by the third stanza in which the vastness of the bear makes his presence seem motionless and omnipresent. The bear seems to appear and disappear. He is larger than life. He is an old bear that was maimed by a trap years ago. He is not a symbol for man, but is important,

"dimensionless" himself. His pain is considered and spoken of with respect in stanza three.

In stanza five, the bear is gone. He has disappeared "as buzzards control,/imperceptibly, their flight." Did the bear simply leave the forest in his own good time? Or did the bear die? The ending is ambiguous. But the presence of buzzards, scavengers that clean the bones of dead animals, suggests that the bear has died. In either case, the poem is "pervaded" by a "sense of grief."

In an interview, Momaday said:

> My study of Tuckerman doesn't influence my work in any conscious way, but I'm sure it does on some level.
> Tuckerman was a very interesting man, a very isolated man who studied astronomy and botany. He was deeply curious about the details of nature.
> I like to think that's been an influence on my work. I like to write carefully about nature, but in different terms than Tuckerman.[7]

"The Bear" does contain the characteristics Momaday identified in Tuckerman's work, but it goes beyond Tuckerman's poems in its descriptive and emotional content. In his introduction to Tuckerman's poems, Momaday said, "His attention is trained upon the surfaces rather than the symbols of his world."[8]

Momaday's poems contain both surfaces and symbols. Having grown up aware of the many meanings inherent in nature by virtue of the oral tradition, and having been influenced by the post-Symbolism of Yvor Winters, Momaday often writes symbolically. As in William Faulkner's story "The Bear," the Bear may symbolize the vanishing wilderness, which is

gone, imperceptibly, little by little, as more and more machines trap, maim and supplant it. Momaday's poem may have been influenced by Faulkner's story. However, the idea presented in the poem, the vanishing of one vast animal or of the wilderness, is essentially Native American. Contemporary American Indian poems abound with animals. A sensitivity to wild animals and their habitat is strongly in the tradition of the indigenous nations for whom these animals were not alien creatures, but relatives. The old stories of Turtle Island, like the ancient fables of Europe, are full of animals.

The style of "The Bear," however is not the style of Native American poetry. Rather, "The Bear" is stylistically a post-Symbolist poem. In discussing "The Bear," Winters said, "The poem is poetry by virtue of the careful selection of details and the careful juxtaposition of these details, selection and juxtaposition which result in concentration of meaning, and by virtue of its rhythm, which is the rhythm of verse, but very subtle."[9] Winters' identification of "The Bear" as poetry does not consider what the poem means, but only that the meaning is concentrated. Nor does Winters point out the overabundance of scholarly diction in "The Bear." This poem, about a bear, an animal of the wilderness, contains several literary words not generally used by educated speakers of the English language. Such diction as "ruse," "escarping" and "rending" seems out of its element

in the forest, and it confuses the reader more than it communicates.

"The Bear" contains too many abstract words which directly state ideas, instead of concrete images which would suggest them. Examples are "valor," "the fact of courage" and "seems forever there."

Yvor Winters described the two post-Symbolist methods as "controlled association" and "imagery weighted with intellectual content."[10] These methods are obviously used in "Comparatives," another poem in the Angle of Geese collection:

Sunlit sea,
the drift of fronds,
and banners
of bobbing boats--
the seaside
of any day--
except: this
cold, bright body
of the fish
upon the planks,
the coil and
crescent of flesh
extending
just into death.

Even so,
in the distant,
inland sea,
a shadow runs,
radiant,
rude in the rock:
fossil fish,
fissure of bone
forever.
It is perhaps
the same thing,
an agony
twice perceived.

It is most like
wind on waves--
mere commotion,
mute and mean,
perceptible--
that is all. (pp. 8-9)

The fish in the first narrow stanza is dying. The fish in the second narrow stanza is a fossil. The poem consists of a "controlled association" of the two fish. There is a logical connection between them. A controlled association is more logical, less intuitive than the kind of association that occurs in Symbolist poetry. At the end of the second stanza, Momaday states the connection. In "Comparatives," rather than causing the reader to see the connection by a careful choice of imagery, Momaday states abstractly what the connection is. Out of the sixteen words in the final stanza, only three could be considered concrete--wind, waves and mute. The association in "Comparatives" is too controlled, and the imagery in the poem is so weighted down with "intellectual content" that the result is more nearly philosophy than poetry.

The title poem of Angle of Geese, like "The Bear" and "Comparatives," is also more nearly post-Symbolist in its formal qualities than American Indian:

How shall we adorn
Recognition with our speech?--
Now the dead firstborn
Will lag in the wake of words.

Custom intervenes;
We are civil, something more:
More than language means
The mute presence mulls and marks.

Almost of a mind,
We take measure of the loss;
I am slow to find
The mere margin of repose.

And one November
It was longer in the watch,
As if forever,
Of the huge ancestral goose.

So much symmetry!
Like the pale angle of time
And eternity
The great shape labored and fell.

Quit of hope and hurt,
It held a motionless gaze,
Wide of time, alert,
On the dark distant flurry. (p. 28)

Again, as in many of the poems in the collection, in "Angle of Geese," an animal is the central image. In their prime the Kiowas were great hunters. In The Way to Rainy Mountain, Momaday writes, "The Kiowas have no tradition of ever having been an agricultural people or anything but a tribe of hunters."[11] American Indians traditionally respect the animal that is hunted and killed to provide meat for the people. This respect is often shown by an attention to the eyes of the dying animal. The narrator of "Angle of Geese" is sensitive to the eyes of the dying goose, its "motionless gaze/ Wide of time, alert."

But despite this Native American aspect, the poem owes much to the post-Symbolist method. Ideas are juxtaposed with images, and the poem is heavy with abstraction. It is a

poem about death. Two deaths are associated and compared. The "dead firstborn" is not identified; however, it is obvious that the death of the first baby born to people close to the narrator of the poem is an event highly charged with emotion. The dead firstborn symbolizes a great loss. The narrator expresses the feelings that accompany the death of the baby in the first three stanzas, which are full of words and phrases seldom used in everyday conversation, literary words. These words are used in the attempt to express "something more" than language can. There is the question as to what to say that will adequately express one's recognition that this person has died. There is the intervening of custom surrounding the funeral, when people share feelings and when the presence of death and the presence of the mourners' silence "mulls and marks" their grief. There is the measuring of what the loss of this baby will mean in their lives and the attempt to contain grief: "I am slow to find/ The mere margin of repose."

The only clear images in the first three stanzas are contained in the third and fourth lines of stanza one, "Now the dead firstborn/ Will lag in the wake of words." The most obvious meaning of "wake" is the wake following a funeral. The use of "wake" also suggests the v-shaped pattern made in water by a boat. When one considers the whole poem, one associates the "wake of words" with the angle of geese, which is also v-shaped. This visual association further

links the two visions of death in the poem.

Repose is found by remembering another death. Nothing of immortality is known or clearly defined, only this about the end of the goose:

> Quit of hope and hurt,
> It held a motionless gaze
> Wide of time, alert
> On the dark distant flurry.

These lines express an intuitive response in words to the death of the goose. And through the controlled associations of the poem, Momaday expresses the abstract feeling and idea that is more than words can say, but that basically acknowledges the forever continuing cycle and unity of life and death. Human and animal, we will all die.

"Angle of Geese" is a powerful poem. But it is less effective stylistically than it might have been. The abstract feeling is expressed, rather than evoked. At the same time "Angle of Geese" works as a poem and is Momaday's best poem in the post-Symbolist style. Momaday has not disowned his tightly-structured poems in the post-Symbolist style, but he has stated recently that he feels that many of the poems in Angle of Geese were too structured and that he is working toward greater flexibility and spontaneity in his poetry.

Beside the poems in the post-Symbolist style in Angle of Geese are poems that clearly flow out of the oral literature and life of American Indians. Such a poem is "Plainview: 2":

I saw an old Indian
At Saddle Mountain.
He drank and dreamed of drinking
And a blue-black horse.

Remember my horse running
Remember my horse.
Remember my horse running
Remember my horse.

Remember my horse wheeling
Remember my horse.
Remember my horse wheeling
Remember my horse.

Remember my horse blowing
Remember my horse.
Remember my horse blowing
Remember my horse.

Remember my horse standing
Remember my horse.
Remember my horse standing
Remember my horse.

Remember my horse hurting
Remember my horse.
Remember my horse hurting
Remember my horse.

Remember my horse falling
Remember my horse.
Remember my horse falling
Remember my horse.

Remember my horse dying
Remember my horse.
Remember my horse dying
Remember my horse.

A horse is one thing,
An Indian another;
An old horse is old;
An old Indian is sad.

I saw an old Indian
At Saddle Mountain.
He drank and dreamed of drinking
And a blue-black horse.

Remember my horse running.
Remember my horse.
Remember my horse wheeling.
Remember my horse.
Remember my horse blowing.
Remember my horse.
Remember my horse standing.
Remember my horse.
Remember my horse falling.
Remember my horse.
Remember my horse dying.
Remember my horse.
Remember my blue-black horse.
Remember my blue-black horse.
Remember my horse.
Remember my horse.
Remember.
Remember. (pp. 16-18)

At first reading, one notices the incremental repetition. "Remember my horse" with various endings is repeated throughout the poem. The words used are simple, but they are filled with meaning in their progression. The horse is remembered as the horse lived, sequentially "running," "wheeling," "blowing," "standing," "hurting," "falling," and "dying." Then the narrator intrudes, repeats what he said in stanza one, and then repeats the memory of the old man, in shortened form, like a chant.

The poem is distinctively Kiowa. Saddle Mountain in the Wichitas is a familiar place to the Kiowa people who have lived in sight of it since they came to the plains from Montana. The plainview of the old Indian drinking juxtaposes the present reality of alcoholism, "He drank and dreamed of drinking," and the feeling of loss that is a main reason why American Indians drink. The old man no longer has the blue-black horse that is his memory.

The plains culture is called the horse or centaur culture. And the horse was essential for travelling the long distances required for hunting on the plains. Various stories in the oral literature of the Kiowas illustrate the important place the horse held in their society, such as this one told by Momaday in The Way to Rainy Mountain:

> In 1861 a Sun Dance was held near the Arkansas River in Kansas. As an offering to Tai-me, a spotted horse was left tied to a pole in the medicine lodge, where it starved to death. Later in that year an epidemic of smallpox broke out in the tribe, and the old man Gaapiatan sacrificed one of his best horses, a fine, black-eared animal, that he and his family might be spared. (p. 95)

Such a sacrifice illustrates the value of the horse in Kiowa culture. The old man's memory of the horse in "Plainview: 2" is analogous to the tribal memory of the glory of past Kiowa life, as it used to be. The old man's final words, "Remember./Remember," are Momaday's way of stating the importance of the Kiowa's remembering their past.

The most direct statement of the spirit of place theme in Angle of Geese is "The Delight Song of Tsoai-talee":

> I am a feather in the bright sky.
> I am the blue horse that runs in the plain.
> I am the fish that rolls, shining, in the water
> I am the shadow that follows a child.
> I am the evening light, the lustre of meadows.
> I am an eagle playing with the wind.
> I am a cluster of bright beads.
> I am the farthest star.
> I am the cold of the dawn.
> I am the roaring of the rain.
> I am the glitter on the crust of the snow.
> I am the long track of the moon in a lake.
> I am a flame of four colors.
> I am a deer standing away in the dusk.

I am a field of sumac and the pomme blanche.
I am an angle of geese upon the winter sky.
I am the hunger of a young wolf.
I am the whole dream of these things.

You see, I am alive, I am alive.
I stand in good relation to the earth.
I stand in good relation to the gods.
I stand in good relation to all that is beautiful.
I stand in good relation to the daughter of Tsen-tainte.
You see, I am alive, I am alive. (p. 22)

Here Momaday, whose Kiowa name, Tsoai-talee, means "Rock-Tree Boy," is singing his "song of myself." In The Names Momaday writes, "The first notable event in my life was a journey to the Black Hills. When I was six months old my parents took me to Devil's Tower,"[12] which the Kiowas call Tsoai, "Rock Tree." In his delight song, Momaday is recreating himself through his imagination. This process is essential in the experience of the artist; embodying the imaginary experience in words is the creative act of the writer.

In finding his identity diversely bound up with all the images of the first stanza, Momaday is going outside his body, by means of his imagination, and thus, extending himself as a man. This is a participation in the spirit of place. The mind, through the imagination, enables one to be "the whole dream of these things"; and so one can participate with the surface sights, feelings, sounds, smells in the environment that is the place of one's being.

The incremental repetition in the poem is important. By using the words "I am," Momaday says, I am this and this and this. I am all these things separately. I do not just

understand the concept of being at one with the land and all life. I am one with these individual parts of the universe. But at the same time, the repetition of "I am alive" acknowledges the broad idea of the Spirit of Place that encompasses the feeling of at-oneness with many-faceted life. "I stand in good relation to" all these things is a further statement of what it is to be alive--"I stand" in delight, Momaday says, in the knowledge of being all these things. The abstractness of stanza two is dependent on the concreteness of stanza one. Before one can come to an understanding and feeling of the spirit of place, one must develop a real knowledge of that place through experience in the material world.

The poem must be understood in the context of Momaday's life and in the context of his writing. "The Delight Song of Tsoai-talee" flows out of the Kiowa tradition. In the preface to The Way to Rainy Mountain, Momaday describes the Devil's Tower, or Tsoai, for which he was named:

> At the top of a ridge I caught sight of Devil's Tower upthrust against the gray sky as if in the birth of time the core of the earth had broken through its crust and the motion of the world was begun. There are things in nature that engender an awful quiet in the heart of man; Devil's Tower is one of them. Two centuries ago, because they could not do otherwise, the Kiowas made a legend at the base of the rock. My grandmother said:
> Eight children were there at play, seven sisters and their brother. Suddenly the boy was struck dumb; he trembled and began to run upon his hands and feet. His fingers became claws, and his body was covered with fur. Directly there was a bear where the boy had been. The sisters were terrified; they ran, and the bear after

> them. They came to the stump of a great tree, and the tree spoke to them. It bade them climb upon it, and as they did so it began to rise into the air. The bear came to kill them, but they were just beyond its reach. It reared against the tree and scored the bark all around with its claws. The seven sisters were borne into the sky, and they became the stars of the Big Dipper. (pp. 8-9)

The legend is the account of a magical transformation. The seven sisters climbed up the tree, into the sky and became the stars of the Big Dipper. Thus the Kiowas have universal kindred. Their spirit of place extends to the sky. It is not confined to the land where they live. This kind of extension of oneself into other parts of nature is a use of the imagination to recreate oneself. The communal act of the imagination which created this legend to explain the origin of the Big Dipper, as related to the rock formation, Tsoai, is a creative act similar to that of Momaday as he names his identity by voicing the many various images of "The Delight Song of Tsoai-talee."

Momaday extends the idea of the legend and uses his imagination to conceptualize and verbalize his own relationship to the creation. Because of the power of his imagination, he is not confined by his body. He is eighteen beautiful images in the poem: "a feather on the bright sky," "the blue horse that runs in the plain," . . . . Each thing Momaday names is a part of nature. The implication is that as long as he lives, Momaday will be extending the list, as he expands his identity through "the whole dream of these things."

Momaday made the "Angle of Geese" collection the first part of his second book of poems, The Gourd Dancer, published in 1976. Momaday has said The Gourd Dancer "contains most of the poems I want to keep." The Gourd Dancer contains three distinct groups of poems, "Angle of Geese," "The Gourd Dancer" and "Anywhere Is a Street Into the Night." The poems in the third part, "Anywhere Is a Street Into the Night," are like Momaday's post-Symbolist poems in that they are vehicles for ideas, more than an obvious development of the oral tradition.

Most of the poems in "Anywhere Is a Street Into the Night" were written during Momaday's stay in the Soviet Union in 1974. He gave a series of lectures on twentieth century American literature at the University of Moscow. Momaday spent four months in the Soviet Union, from January through April.

During this period, Momaday was far from the places he feels closest to--New Mexico and Arizona's mesas, valleys and deserts, and the Wichitas in Oklahoma. Perhaps because of this distance, the poems in "Anywhere Is a Street Into the Night" are more about people and ideas and less involved with the landscape than most of his poetry. They are personal poems, only peripherally related to the oral tradition. The title, "Anywhere Is a Street Into the Night," indicates that any occasion provides a way for the creative process of imagining to begin. In this collection of poems, night is

symbolic of the imaginary process or the dream, which is the beginning of the creative process. Most of the poems in this third part of The Gourd Dancer have as their setting an enclosure from which the environment is seen. The narrator describes what is happening inside or what is happening outside the enclosure, or the relationship between the two. "Krasnopresnenskaya Station" is an example:

> Their faces do not change at their mouths.
> They read and look after themselves.
> I mean them no harm,
> but they are afraid of me.
>
> I sit at the window. I wonder
> that they keep so, to themselves,
> in their trains, in the deep streets.
> I have no prospects here.
>
> One, a girl not yet disappointed, perhaps,
> approaches close to me. I suppose
> she does not remember herself;
> she dreams of the lindens at Arkhangelskoe.
>
> She would speak of ordinary things;
> I would listen
> for the hard resonances of the river,
> the ice breaking apart in the afternoon.[13]

The poem begins in a lonely mood. Momaday is experiencing the alienation of a traveller who is unable to communicate with the people around him because of the language barrier, but more seriously, he is experiencing a social barrier as a result of the Russian people's fear of him, since he does not look like them. Momaday is not on his way home or to a place within his own country, like the people around him. He is not surrounded, as they are, by a familiar place and culture.

Momaday writes, "I sit at the window." He sits where he is least separated from the outside environment. The statement also means that unlike the people who "keep so to themselves," looking inside, he is looking outside himself, at them, and wanting to communicate, to have some relationship with them. Since these people are not friendly, Momaday writes, "I have no prospects here."

Then the girl appears, "approaches close to me." Unlike the others she doesn't seem afraid. Momaday says she is "not yet disappointed, perhaps." What she is not disappointed with is not made evident. Perhaps she has not been disappointed by the unfriendliness of strangers or by the actions of American tourists. Unlike the others with their closed, tight faces refusing to acknowledge Momaday's presence, "she does not remember herself." She is outgoing, rather than inward turning. And "she dreams of the lindens at Arkhangelskoe," a place she loves, making her like Momaday, who also dreams of places. This likeness in feeling brings the two together.

The final stanza, in which she speaks, while he listens, contains two strong images, "the hard resonances of the river" and "the ice breaking apart in the afternoon." The "resonances of the river" are deep. The "ice breaking apart" is a thawing. In their implications of meaning, these images contrast with the lonely alienation expressed in the first two stanzas. The mood is subjunctive; "She would

speak." As he listens, Momaday does not understand the meanings of the Russian words, but he dreams as she speaks, and her speaking sounds like the "hard resonances of the river" and "ice breaking apart in the afternoon."

Although "Krasnopresnenskaya Station" is an indoor poem, it is a spirit of place poem, for it conveys what it felt like to be in that place, the station, and how Momaday's emotions and imagination were affected by that setting.

Another poem growing out of Momaday's stay in Russia is "Crows in a Winter Composition":

> This morning the snow,
> The soft distances
> Beyond the trees
> In which nothing appeared--
> Nothing appeared--
> The several silences,
> Imposed one upon another,
> Were unintelligible.
>
> I was therefore ill at ease
> When the crows came down,
> Whirling down and calling,
> Into the yard below
> And stood in a mindless manner
> On the gray, luminous crust,
> Altogether definite, composed,
> In the bright enmity of my regard,
> In the hard nature of crows. (p. 53)

In this poem, the narrator seems to be looking out a window at the snow. Viewing the scene as a composition, the poet remarks on the effect of the snow--"the soft distances," and the stillness and sameness of the scene "In which nothing appeared." Momaday repeats "Nothing appeared," and one is reminded of the Wallace Stevens poem, "The Snow Man," in which Stevens writes about the effect of snow on the

perceiver. Stevens' poem ends:

> For the listener, who listens in the snow,
> And, nothing himself, beholds
> Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is.[14]

The tendency to be absorbed in the scene filled with snow, the tendency to view the scene and to consider its silence, is probably universal. When the environment is transformed by snow, the senses feel and see the great difference the snow has made, and the individual may be completely absorbed in the setting. But Momaday's "Winter Composition" is invaded by crows. They come down and disturb the silent tranquility of the scene. The crows are "composed" because they are comfortable in the scene, not in the same sense that the scene was composed in the still silence of stanza one. The crows impose themselves, the poet writes, "In the bright enmity of my regard/ In the hard nature of crows." Thus is the poet forced to write the reality of the place. "Crows in a Winter Composition" is partly post-Symbolist in its method; the abstract philosophical idea is the overriding concern of the poet in stanza one. However, the "wheeling down and calling" crows of stanza two disturb the order of the first stanza. They seem to say that such art, so tranquil and serene, such a beautiful, undisturbed view may be lovely, but it is not representative of life. The "hard nature of crows" breaks the dream and brings the poet back to the real scene and to the fact that the landscape is constantly being transformed. The poet feels "ill at ease"

when the crows enter the scene, as the artist who wants to concentrate on the beauty of the natural scene must. Momaday recognizes in himself, as poet, the desire to paint the beautiful in words, ignoring disorderly disturbances of ideal beauty. But as artist with his eyes open on the world, Momaday acknowledges that he must describe the scene as it is, even if he is not pleased with something he sees. Thus, his eyes must be focused on life, not art, if he is to write with honesty. The title of the poem, "Crows in a Winter Composition," suggests that the crows were its reason for being. The poem would be boring without them. This poem about art suggests that Momaday, as artist, cannot compose a poem for the sake of poetry. He cannot like Keats say, "Beauty is truth, truth beauty,--that is all/ Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know." It may be unpleasant for the artist to acknowledge the "hard nature" of things that are true. But as artist Momaday cannot do otherwise. He must include the crows in the composition, even if he wishes they had not come. Momaday is too conscious of the realities of life to create art for art's sake. The details of his poems are carefully selected, but they are selected to convey truth, not just beauty. "Crows in a Winter Composition" is, in a sense, a statement of one of Momaday's poetic principles, that life is more important than art.

Like "Crows in a Winter Composition," "That Woman and This Woman" is a poem that can be understood as a statement

of poetic principle:

> That woman: she is composed--
> has indeed composed herself--
> among the shapes and shadows
> that call for her,
> for which she is the complement.
> She brings, with her bag of tricks,
> everything into place.
> She sits at a small, round table,
> rather far away, against the sunlit wall.
> I see that her mouth is expressive,
> that she is certainly beautiful.
> She does not suspect
> the existence of so many things
> that are unlike my regard
> in one way or another.
> Such things, if indeed they existed for her,
> she should put aside at once and forever.
>
> She is certainly beautiful,
> and one cannot help himself--
> he must desire her.
> But he must also understand
> that she consists in his desire.
>
> This woman: she laughs easily,
> and so does she love.
> Just now she is of a mind
> to raise the hem of her dress to her eyes
> and place her thighs to the wind. (p. 57)

Momaday carefully describes "that woman" who "has indeed composed herself" in the first stanza. She is the sort of woman who carefully makes herself up and who acts in certain ways so that men will desire her. Her beauty is entirely conscious. She seems completely under control, but she has no depth. She is only a carefully contrived outward appearance. One "must desire her/ But he must also understand/ that she consists in his desire." That woman, whom Momaday has described contrives herself so that she will be desired, not according to her own spirit. That woman exists

apart from her admirer, as indicated by the demonstrative adjective that. She is dominated by male expectations. She is like a carefully constructed poem, formed in an appropriate manner to elicit a response, and consisting of form more than substance.

In contrast to "That Woman" is "This Woman." This woman is not set apart, but is near, as indicated by the demonstrative this. She acts spontaneously, according to her feelings, intuitions, emotions as "she laughs easily,/ and so does she love." She is not sitting apart to attract a man's desire. She is laughing and loving, expressing herself. She consists in her own lively responses to life. And she exhibits a spirit of place in harmony with a force of nature, the wind:

> Just now she is of a mind
> to raise the hem of her dress to her eyes
> and place her thighs to the wind.

With this spontaneous and powerful image, Momaday illustrates what he thinks poetry should be, more life than art. That woman was calculating. This woman is in harmony with the spontaneity and ever-changing spirit of the natural world. This woman does what she feels like doing.

In his poetry N. Scott Momaday is breaking away from preconceived ideas about the necessary ingredients in poetry, and he is giving freer reign to impulse. "This Woman" is a metaphor for spontaneous poetic expression.

The poems in "Anywhere Is a Street Into the Night" are interesting in a theoretical sense. They explain poetically Momaday's ideas about the imagination and the relation of life to art. The imagination can be articulated in any place, as the poetry in "Anywhere Is a Street Into the Night" illustrates. However, the poems in this group are not Momaday's best poetry. They were not written out of the places and cultures Momaday is most familiar with.

Although Momaday has primarily lived in California since he arrived at Stanford in the fall of 1959, little of his writing has been set in California. The Southwest has been the setting for most of his writing. In an interview, Momaday explained:

> I think my concept of a wholeness of vision, or integrity of vision is really related to the landscape, and it is the landscape of the Southwest. It has to do with the light and the shape of the land, and things like that. I don't associate an integrity of vision with the California landscape, though I think it would be possible for someone to do that. It's just not the way I would do it. I suppose because I have a deeper investment in the Southwest.[15]

Momaday's best poetry has as its setting the Southwest, and it is expressive of the spirit of that place. The second part of The Gourd Dancer, entitled "The Gourd Dancer" is at the center of the book. This group of poems is, as a whole, more clearly expressive of the spirit of place and more obviously an outgrowth of Kiowa tradition than any of Momaday's other poetry.

"Carriers of the Dream Wheel," one of the poems in the group, is about the oral tradition and those who keep it alive:

> This is the Wheel of Dreams
> Which is carried on their voices,
> By means of which their voices turn
> And center upon being
> It encircles the First World,
> This powerful wheel.
> They shape their songs upon the wheel
> And spin the names of the earth and sky,
> The aboriginal names
> They are old men, or men
> Who are old in their voices,
> And they carry the wheel among the camps,
> Saying: Come, come,
> Let us tell the old stories,
> Let us sing the sacred songs. (p. 42)

The "Wheel of Dreams" is the oral tradition. The wheel is circular, and so symbolic of life. As it revolves, it changes consistently with the forces of life. The wheel carries stories so that they can travel distances in time and space. The wheel of tradition carries the dreams of people. These dreams are expressed through language, by voices. Earlier in this chapter I quoted Momaday's statement about oral and written literature. This poem emphasizes the importance of the <u>voices</u> of the old people which carry the wheel of dreams. The word has power when it is used as the poem indicates. The "voices turn/ and center upon being," thus becoming universal. They express more than individual, personal dreams. They express the dreams of humanity. The "First World" in the poem is the creation. It is the world of nature. This world of nature is encircled by the powerful

words of the stories and songs. The creation is a place so vast that we call it infinity. The wheel is circular in keeping with cyclic nature. Those who dream the stories and songs "shape their songs upon the wheel" in keeping with the creation.

The creative act of these carriers of the dream wheel is to "spin the names of earth and sky." The formation of language, "the aboriginal names," is the first creative act. The people who carry the oral tradition on their voices are "old men" or "men/ Who are old in their voices" because they must have been acquainted with this wheel of dreams for a long time to be able to carry it, and they must have the wisdom to respect the stories and songs in order to retell them. And, of course, the wheel turns. The old men must be creative so that they can keep the wheel alive with their own dreams. In the final three lines, when he has the old men speak, Momaday seems also to be telling others to "tell the old stories" and "sing the sacred songs" as he has as a writer.

"Carriers of the Dream Wheel" is about the poetic imagination of a people. Momaday's voice is a carrier of the Dream Wheel.

The title poem of Momaday's second book of poetry, "The Gourd Dancer," is strongly in the oral tradition. It was written in honor of Momaday's grandfather, Mammedaty. The poem has four parts, which alternate in style. The first is

"The Omen":

> Another season centers on this place.
> Like memory the blood congeals in it;
> Like memory the sun recedes in time
> Into the hazy, southern distances.
>
> A vagrant heat hangs on the dark river,
> And shadows turn like smoke. An owl ascends
> Among the branches, clattering, remote
> Within its motion, intricate with age. (p. 35)

"The Omen," based on an experience in nature which has strongly affected Momaday, is the setting from which the dream emanates. "The Omen" creates a mood. Sitting there in the summer, the poet dreams of what his grandfather may have been doing years ago at just such a time of year in the same place. The central image in "The Omen" is the owl, a bird associated with death in Kiowa culture. An owl can live for about seventy years, as long as a human being. Momaday associates the owl with his grandfather, Mammedaty, as if the owl embodied Mammedaty's spirit "remote/ Within its motion, intricate with age." Written in subtle iambic pentameter, "The Omen" has a formality appropriate for its mood.

In "The Dream" Momaday dreams of the time when Mammedaty built the house where his family has since lived:

> Mammedaty saw to the building of this house.
> Just there, by the arbor, he made a camp in the old way.
> And in the evening when the hammers had fallen silent
> and there were frogs and crickets in the black grass--
> and a low, hectic wind upon the pale, slanting plane
> of the moon's light--he settled deep down in his mind
> to dream. He dreamed of dreaming, and of the summer
> breaking upon his spirit, as drums break upon the
> intervals of the dance, and of the gleaming gourds.
> (p. 35)

Momaday, in his dream is combining what people have told him about Mammedaty's building of the house--"Just there, by the arbor, he made a camp in the old way"--with his dream of what Mammedaty might have been experiencing and dreaming. To write about Mammedaty in his wholeness, Momaday includes more than his actions; he includes his dreams "of dreaming," "of the summer breaking upon his spirit" and "of the gleaming gourds." Mammedaty is conceived of as having been comfortable in his environment. By allowing us a look into Mammedaty's mind, Momaday makes the reader comfortable with him. Prose poetry is appropriate for the spontaneity of "The Dream."

Mammedaty was a dreamer. And he dreams as he dances in part three, "The Dance":

> Dancing,
> He dreams, he dreams--
> The long wind glances, moves
> Forever as a music to the mind;
> The gourds are flashes of the sun.
> He takes the inward, mincing steps
> That conjure old processions and returns.
>
> Dancing,
> His moccasins,
> His sash and bandolier
> Contain him in insignia;
> His fan is powerful, concise
> According to his agile hand,
> And holds upon the deep, ancestral air. (pp. 35-36)

Mammedaty dreams of the wind which is like "music to the mind," and in his dream he sees gourds as "flashes of the sun." These insights link him to the natural elements, enabling him to intuit the relationship between the sun and

the gourd that grew the color of the sun as a result of the sun's rays of heat and light, through his dance.

Mammedaty's steps are the same steps Kiowa people before him have danced. The "inward, mincing steps" are like the voices of the carriers of the dream wheel because they too are part of the traditions of the Kiowa people, linking them to the creation. "The Dance" is written in what might be termed a pyramidal syllabic meter. Each stanza begins with two syllables, and the number of syllables is increased in each line, until line seven, which is iambic pentameter. The rhythm and line lengths seem appropriate for the movement of the dance.

The clothing Mammedaty wears in the dancing is a further expression of Mammedaty and his tribe. The moccasins, sash and bandolier are insignia of the tribe, but they are designed especially for Mammedaty, to express his essential nature. The powerful eagle feather fan he holds in his "agile hand," even more than his clothing, links him to the dream wheel as it "holds upon the deep ancestral air." The dancing is part of a ceremony that has developed over centuries among the Kiowa people.

The fourth part of the poem is "The Giveaway." Like part two, "The Dream," this part is written as prose poetry:

> Someone spoke his name, Mammedaty, in which his essence was and is. It was a serious matter that his name should be spoken there in the circle, among the many people, and he was thoughtful, full of wonder, and aware of himself and his name. He walked

> slowly to the summons, looking into the eyes of the man who summoned him. For a moment they held each other in close regard, and all about them there was excitement and suspense.
>
> Then a boy came suddenly into the circle, leading a black horse. The boy ran, and the horse after him. He brought the horse up short in front of Mammedaty, and the horse wheeled and threw its head and cut its eyes in the wild way. And it blew hard and quivered in its hide so that light ran, rippling, upon its shoulders and its flanks--and then it stood still and was calm. Its mane and tail were fixed in braids and feathers, and a bright red chief's blanket was draped in a roll over its withers. The boy placed the reins in Mammedaty's hands. And all of this was for Mammedaty, in his honor, as even now it is in the telling, and will be, as long as there are those who imagine him in his name. (pp. 36-37)

In the Kiowa language, the name Mammedaty means "Walking Above."[16] No doubt the meaning of his name is important. Mammedaty has passed into the spirit world, and Momaday dreams of him and writes this dream after the owl, which might be thought of as "walking above," reminds him of his grandfather. But the main reason for emphasis on the name "in which his essence was and is" is that the Kiowas were aware of the power of a person's name. This power was explained in Momaday's words in chapter one. The name Momaday is a shortened form of Mammedaty.

Mammedaty is being honored when his name is spoken there in the circle. He is being singled out. His identity is being affirmed and called attention to by another member of his society, and this makes him "aware of himself and his name."

Mammedaty is being highly honored in another way, for the man who has spoken his name is giving him a horse, the most valued of the Kiowas' possessions, and it is a beautiful and spirited horse that has been specially prepared to be given to Mammedaty. Momaday has described the beauty of the black horse to show the wonder of such an honor. This story that Momaday has heard about his grandfather must have great meaning in the poet's life. Momaday was given a horse when he was thirteen, and he has said that his imagination began to grow when he was riding the horse.[17]

Like the gift of the horse, Momaday's imagining and telling of Mammedaty's story is in Mammedaty's honor. The poem, "The Gourd Dancer," is a continuation of the Dream Wheel. It is clearly related to Kiowa traditions, and it grows out of the writer's spirit of place, as expressed in the first part of the four-part poem.

"The Dream" and "The Giveaway" are spontaneous in their style. Like these prose sections of "The Gourd Dancer," Momaday's prose in House Made of Dawn, The Way to Rainy Mountain and The Names is poetic in its sound, imagery and general effect. Momaday has said that his poetry has been moving in the direction of prose poetry, and that he is pleased about that.[18]

"The Colors of Night," a series of prose poems in The Gourd Dancer, illustrates this direction. The colors of night are white, yellow, brown, red, green, blue, purple and

black. Each of these colors is related to its poem. Although colors are symbolic to all peoples, American Indians seem particularly aware of the meanings of colors as they paint, write or speak. The colors of night represent different ways in which the imagination may be expressed. In "The Colors of Night," as in "Anywhere Is a Street Into the Night," night symbolizes the imagination. Each of the prose poems excites the imagination of the reader. The poems are mythical in that they relate things that happen on the earth poetically. The poetic explanation requires an intuitive, rather than a rational understanding.

Momaday has great respect for the power of the imagination. He has said, "We are what we imagine ourselves to be."[19] Like the Kiowa people "glad to see so many things," Momaday's imagination delights in what his eyes see in the natural landscape. An emphasis on this existence, on the individual's relationship with the place of existence during life on this earth is an appreciation of the surfaces of this world. Such a spirit of place does not deny that there is an existence outside or beyond or underneath the material world, but neither does it dwell on what is underneath the surface. Asked to interpret Tosamah, a character in House Made of Dawn, Momaday said, "If I were to lift the veil, there would be nothing or no one there." He went on to say that if it were not for the unknown, the universe would be a boring place and that there is a great beauty and vitality

in the surfaces of things. Such beauty, he said, is enhanced by the fact that one can't know what is behind the surfaces.[20]

Concentration on the surfaces of the natural world, then, is not a denial of something beyond or behind nature. Such writing concentrates on observed reality, without attempting to explain the unexplainable mysteries beneath the surface. This material world is, after all, the medium of our existence. At the same time, "The Colors of Night" are more than colors; in these prose poems, Momaday, like the traditional story teller, is dealing in magic.

There is a vitality in the surfaces of things in "White," the first poem in "The Colors of Night":

> An old man's son was killed far away in the Staked Plains. When the old man heard of it he went there and gathered up the bones. Thereafter, wherever the old man ventured, he led a dark hunting horse which bore the bones of his son on its back. And the old man said to whomever he saw: 'You see how it is that now my son consists in his bones, that his bones are polished and so gleam like glass in the light of the sun and moon, that he is very beautiful.'

In this narrative, the white bones are the image that excites the reader's imagination. One can visualize the old man leading the "dark hunting horse which bore the bones of the son on its back." And it is a remarkable thing to imagine. Although most people would likely be horrified to see such a sight (especially at night), in Momaday's poem, the picture seems more beautiful and sacred than horrifying. This is because of the way Momaday has expressed the feeling of the old man. The man's love was so strong that he kept with him

the only remains of his son, what his son has been transformed into, his bones. And he thinks of these bones that "are polished and so gleam like glass in the light of sun and moon" as "very beautiful." The bones are white; white is usually symbolic of spirituality. But the meaning of this poem would be twisted if one asserted that the old man has with him the spirit of his son. The old man does appreciate and respect the bones that were part of his son and that nature has polished. The son consists in something different from what he was. The old man says, "my son consists in his bones." The old man is mad in that his actions do not conform to social custom. But his madness is visionary. And Momaday describes him with sensitivity and insight.

The second poem in the series, "Yellow," is again the story of a transformation:

> There was a boy who drowned in the river, near the grove of thirty-two bois d'arc trees. The light of the moon lay like a path on the water, and a glitter of low brilliance shone in it. The boy looked at it and was enchanted. He began to sing a song that he had never heard before; only then, once, did he hear it in his heart, and it was borne like a cloud of down upon his voice. His voice entered into the bright track of the moon, and he followed after it. For a time he made his way along the path of the moon, singing. He paddled with his arms and legs and felt his body rocking down into the swirling water. His vision ran along the path of light and reached across the wide night and took hold of the moon. And across the river, where the path led into the shadows of the bank, a black dog emerged from the river, shivering and shaking the water from its hair. All night it stood in the waves of grass and howled the full moon down. (pp. 44-45)

"Yellow" is about a boy who has drowned. The moon is the central image in the poem. The feminine moon gives the poem

a feeling of mystery. Its light seduces the boy into the water. Like many myths and legends, this story shows the power of the moon to enchant. The boy's voice enters the bright track of the moon. He swims along its path until he is caught in a whirlpool. The black dog seems to be mourning for the boy who has given in to his impulse and drowned in his enchantment. In this night of the full moon, the boy has lost touch with reality and has given himself completely over to the imagination. He is a romantic in the extreme. Romanticism in the extreme is suicide, nothing being to the Romantic more beautiful than death. The final mystery is the question, was the boy transformed into the black dog? The answer remains unknown.

At the heart of the third poem in the series, "Brown," is a mystery:

> On the night before a flood, the terrapins move to high ground. How is it that they know? Once there was a boy who took up a terrapin in his hands and looked at it for a long time, as hard as he could look. He succeeded in memorizing the terrapin's face, but he failed to see how it was that the terrapin knew anything at all.
> (p. 45)

How does the terrapin know to move to higher ground the night before a flood? This instinctual knowledge will probably remain a mystery. There is no way to tell by looking at the terrapin, no matter how closely one observes it, "how it was that the terrapin knew anything at all"; and we have not learned how to communicate with terrapins.

Brown is the color of the earth over which the terrapin crawls and the color of the terrapin that is the poem's central image. In this terrapin there is some knowledge of the earth that people lack.

The fourth poem in the series, "Red," takes its color from the sumac and pipestone that are its central images, as the colors of the woman:

> There was a man who had got possession of a powerful medicine. And by means of this medicine he made a woman out of sumac leaves and lived with her for a time. Her eyes flashed, and her skin shone like pipestone. But the man abused her, and so his medicine failed. The woman was caught up in a whirlwind and blown apart. Then nothing was left of her but a thousand withered leaves scattered in the plain. (p. 45)

This poem, like the first two in the series, is about a transformation. The man's medicine was so powerful that he was able to create a woman out of sumac leaves, a beautiful woman with flashing eyes and smooth, luminous skin. But when the man abuses her, he loses this woman, for she is blown apart by the wind. And the leaves that were used to make her, no longer part of the sumac plant, are withered.

Such a story is a wondrous thing. It reminds one of the myth of Pygmalion and Galatea, in that both stories tell of a man creating his wife. But the stories have an important difference. Pygmalion created a statue, which was then given life by Venus. As far as we know, Pygmalion lived in harmony with Galatea. In "Red," however, the man abuses his woman. This causes his creation to be destroyed. This artist's power failed when he acted in disharmony with nature.

"Red" embodies the spirit of place. As I walk across scattered sumac leaves, I will think of the poem and the woman.

The fifth poem in the series is about a vision by moonlight. Its color, "Green";

> A young girl awoke one night and looked out into the moonlit meadow. There appeared to be a tree; but it was only an appearance; there was a shape made of smoke; but it was only an appearance; there was a tree. (pp. 45-46)

Green is the color of trees, and by ending "there was a tree," Momaday indicates that what the girl saw was what her imagination saw out there in the moonlit meadow, rather than what was the external reality. The shape made of smoke and the tree are one thing, the tree, in the girl's imagination. "Green" is a poem about the power of the imagination.

The sixth poem in the series, "Blue" is again about a vision:

> One night there appeared a child in the camp. No one had ever seen it before. It was not bad-looking, and it spoke a language that was pleasant to hear, though none could understand it. The wonderful thing was that the child was perfectly unafraid, as if it were at home among its own people. The child got on well enough, but the next morning it was gone, as suddenly as it had appeared. Everyone was troubled. But then it came to be understood that the child never was, and everyone felt better. 'After all,' said an old man, 'how can we believe in the child? It gave us not one word of sense to hold on to. What we saw, if indeed we saw anything at all, must have been a dog from a neighboring camp, or a bear that wandered down from the high country.' (p. 46)

The poem "Blue" differs from the other poems in the series in that it contains fewer images. The narrative has an American Indian setting. The people are in a camp. When it is

generally agreed that the child never was, the old man asks, "how can we believe in the child? It gave us not one word of sense to hold on to." The child spoke in a different language, so the people could not understand what the child was saying. The vagueness of the child is reflected in the abstraction of the poem. The old man speculates that it may have been a dog or a bear that the people saw, but if in fact it was, the dog or bear's appearance would have been transformed in order for the people to have thought the animal was a child. The logic used by the old man--connecting the unreality of the child to the fact that they could not hold onto his words--shows how strongly the old man believed in the power of words.

In the seventh poem in the series, "Purple," a buffalo is transformed into mountains, his blood, into the sunset:

> There was a man who killed a buffalo bull to no purpose, only he wanted its blood on his hands. It was a great, old, noble beast, and it was a long time blowing its life away. On the edge of the night the people gathered themselves up in their grief and shame. Away in the west they could see the hump and spine of the huge beast which lay dying along the edge of the world. They could see its bright blood run into the sky, where it dried, darkening, and was at last flecked with flakes of light. (pp. 46-47)

Here a phenomenon in nature, the colors of the sunset and the way its colors change, is explained by a story. The story is related to American Indian custom in that because of their respect for and appreciation of animals, they considered the killing of an animal a serious thing. They only hunted out of the need for food, clothing and other things

the animal could provide for their lives. By hunting the buffalo, a hunter could bring back enough food in a single day to supply his family for a year. The buffalo was a sacred animal to the Native Americans.

In his book, Lame Deer: Seeker of Visions, Lame Deer, a Sioux medicine man, explains the Indian's attitude toward killing, contrasting it to the violent lust for killing that the U.S. military taught the soldiers who fought against the American Indians a century ago and the soldiers who fought a decade ago in the Vietnam War:

> When we killed a buffalo, we knew what we were doing. We apologized to his spirit, tried to make him understand why we did it, honoring with a prayer the bones of those who gave their flesh to keep us alive, praying for their return, praying for the life of our brothers, the buffalo nation, as well as for our own people. You wouldn't understand this and that's why we had the Washita Massacre, the Sand Creek Massacre, the dead women and babies at Wounded Knee. That's why we have Song My and My Lai now.[21]

Like the Sioux people, the Kiowas respect the Buffalo's spirit. In "Purple," the people's reaction to the man's thoughtless killing was "grief and shame." The Kiowas would have to endure much more grief and shame, especially toward the end of the 19th century when white men slaughtered buffaloes by the thousands and left them to rot on the plains. In Momaday's poem, nature, in the form of the sunset, seems to grieve at the death of the old, noble buffalo bull that the man killed so he could get blood on his hands.

The eighth and final color of night is "Black":

> There was a woman whose hair was long and heavy and black and beautiful. She drew it about her like a shawl and so divided herself from the world that not even Age could find her. Now and then she steals into the men's societies and fits her voice into their holiest songs. And always, just there, is a shadow which the firelight cannot cleave. (p. 47)

The beautiful and magical woman with the long black hair is at the center of this poem. She is like the night, and she represents the imagination. She "fits her voice into their holiest songs." This woman is ageless, creative and always mysterious. She appears as a shadow and is an affirmation of the spirit, as she breaks the societal rules. Only through her mysterious power, arising from intuition and feeling, can the dream wheel continue.

All these prose poems making up "The Colors of Night" are evocations of the spirit of night, as it brings forth the imagination. And they, by their surface imagery, suggest the spirit of a time, which is also a place, familiar to all of us--the night.

Another poem in the second section of The Gourd Dancer which is particularly expressive of the spirit of place is "To a Child Running with Outstretched Arms in Canyon de Chelly":

> You are small and intense
> In your excitement, whole,
> Embodied in delight.
> The backdrop is immense;
>
> The sand banks break and roll
> Through cleavages of light
> And shadow. You embrace
> The spirit of this place. (p. 49)

In his Poetics, Aristotle noted that the imaginations of children are especially alive, and as a consequence, they act, imitating what they see. The child in the above poem unselfconsciously becomes one with his setting, acting it out with his physical being. Momaday has described just such a process as the poem reveals in his essay, "A First American Views His Land":

> Very old in the Native American world is the conviction that the earth is vital, that there is a spiritual dimension to it, a dimension in which man rightly exists. It follows logically that there are ethical imperatives in this matter. I think: Inasmuch as I am in the land, it is appropriate that I should affirm myself in the spirit of the land. I shall celebrate my life in the world and the world in my life. In the natural order man invests himself in the landscape and at the same time incorporates the landscape into his own most fundamental experience. This trust is sacred.
>
> This process of investment and appropriation is, I believe, preeminently a function of the imagination. It is accomplished by means of an act of the imagination that is especially ethical in kind. We are what we imagine ourselves to be.[22]

The child running with outstretched arms is not rationally considering the meaning of the sand banks or cleavages of light and shadow. He is simply participating in the spirit of place by embracing it. The spirit of place is a feeling of embracing the natural world, and this feeling makes one, like the child in the poem, "Embodied in delight." Embracing the natural environment, one feels unified with it.

Momaday's best poetry is, like "To a Child Running with Outstretched Arms in Canyon de Chelly," both an expression of the Spirit of Place and a development of the oral tradition. A great writer can extend our awareness, making

us know more of what it means to be alive. Momaday's best poetry makes us more aware of what it means to live in America, and to be at-one with this land.

CHAPTER III

THE SPIRIT OF PLACE IN THE POETRY OF CARTER REVARD

Carter Revard is a close observer of nature. Like Momaday's, Revard's best poetry is a continuation and development of the traditions of his people, and it is expressive of the spirit of place. Revard's poetry is poetry of experience; it has emerged from his life.

Carter Revard grew up in Oklahoma, between Pawhuska and Bartlesville, near Buck Creek. His father was part Osage. His step father, Addison Jump, is full-blood Osage. Revard grew up among six brothers and sisters; his four half brothers and sisters are half Osage. He also had many Ponca relatives . His Osage grandmother, whose frybread and meat pies Revard vividly remembers, was the source of one of his best poems.

Many of Revard's poems record childhood experiences in the Buck Creek area. He looks back at that place as his home and identifies with it in much the same way that Momaday identifies with the Wichitas where his Kiowa relatives live and with New Mexico where he grew up. Relatives enter many of Revard's poems about his home. Through Revard's

descriptions of the people who lived near Pawhuska and through his dramatizations of their speech, the spirit of the place is enhanced. These people are a part of the place where they live.

Revard received a radio quiz scholarship to the University of Tulsa. He left home to begin what was to become a career as scholar, teacher and poet. While at Tulsa, he was awarded a Rhodes scholarship to Oxford. He began writing poetry at Oxford. But he was unsatisfied with the poetry he was writing. He has compared that early poetry to "building a 50-yard road that went nowhere."[1] The Oxford poems were long and philosophical. In the best of those early poems, Revard describes a natural scene in England and associates it with his home in Oklahoma. He seems to have been hindered from developing his poetic voice while so far from the familiar voices which have later become the sources of the words in his poetry.

After his studies at Oxford, Revard went on to Yale University where he completed a Ph.D. in Medieval English Literature. During his time at Yale, he did not write poetry. He has said, "I thought what was being done in the name of poetry there at Yale just tied up and cramped anything I had to say." (Bross, p. 2)

Revard resumed writing poetry when teaching at Amherst University. In the spring of 1958, he wrote "The Coyote." Revard describes the experience of writing that poem:

> I was sitting in my room one night, and I could hear . . . rain hitting the roof. I really got to listening to it, and began remembering a thunderstorm back in Oklahoma when I was 16. I had found a coyote den that night of the thunderstorm, and I began to wonder how a coyote might hear this rain in his dean.
> I started writing and wrote . . . 'The Coyote.' I suppose it was in that poem that I discovered I didn't need to worry any more about meter being regular or counted by somebody else's time.
> I felt that I got hold of ways of doing things then. I got back into the Oklahoma thing. (Bross, p. 2)

"The Coyote" was a beginning. Revard had chosen a perspective to write from that is typically American Indian. He had also become aware of his own voice as it is rooted in the place where he grew up.

Some of Carter Revard's poems are distinctly American Indian in that they are a development and continuation of Osage and Ponca traditions. Others are not. Almost all of his poems embody the spirit of place. Many of Revard's latest poems reveal a strong political consciousness. In 1968 when he was taking his children through the Black Hills of South Dakota, Revard met some Indians who told him that their conditions of life were bad and that they would have to take action soon. Four years later, Revard visited his cousin, Carter Camp, who told him that things were worse and that somebody should stand up for American Indians' rights. Many of Revard's relatives went to Washington, D.C. on the Trail of Broken Treaties march a short time after that. Then in 1973, Revard read that his cousin Carter had been arrested, and he went to Wounded Knee in March of 1973. Revard has come to understand and support the political aims of the

American Indian Movement. And many of his poems, like "Discovery of the New World," reflect this political consciousness.

Although Revard is not a "warrior," he supports the aims of American Indians through his poetry and his teaching. Carter Revard is now teaching in the English Department of Washington University in St. Louis. He teaches American Indian Literature as well as Medieval English Literature. Some of Revard's best poems are anthologized in Kenneth Rosen's Voices of the Rainbow: Contemporary Poetry by American Indians.

Although Revard is only a small part Osage, he grew up among American Indians, and he still identifies with his Osage and Ponca relatives. He visits them in Pawhuska two or three times a year, and he attends the dances of the Osage and Ponca people. Out of this environment flows Revard's best poetry.

But to look at Revard's work completely and honestly, it is important to look back at the first poetry he wrote at Oxford. In doing so, one notices the origin of the best qualities of his later poetry. One of Revard's best Oxford poems is "Merton Gardens":

(Oklahoma and Merton, '52)

Crouched and shivering upon the soft blue-velvet sofa
Mangy with wear and sagging on its wooden bones,
The electric fire close to chill knees and cold sweaty feet,
I have read all night, with the curtains drawn, in this black book

Of Meister Eckhart's, filled with images of light and talk
Of emptying mind of all images, of journeying deep in the soul's darkness
To the sweet fountains of life, light within light in God;
Now the book has gone dull, the bleared mind won't focus,
My watch tells me the dawn comes soon, and I should be going
In to the cold bedroom, to undress on freezing floors,
Climb on that narrow and wobbly bed, and try to sleep.
I watch there on the mantel's dark wood where it's propped with books
The frost-lit, red-and-blue-outsprawl, the ironic vibrance
Of casual revelation in my unframed print of Brueghel's Adoration of the Magi: so many things alive as Christ--
Pigeons, rooster, ramshackle thatch of the roof. Were they,
Mother and son, journeying beyond all namable things,
Or were they kings? I rise and stretch, put the dark book back
On its shelf, walk out the door and click over the dim
Concrete hall, down three steps to the college gardens.
Chill and dark, a little breeze from the east: crunching
Along the gravelled walk on numb feet, the jar of earth
Comes harshly through knee and ankle. The breeze of dawn,
But no light yet. I walk toward the ancient wall and up
Onto the gravelled rampart-walk, lean my hands and weight
On the soft stone, look out over the darkness of Merton Meadows.
I hear the sighs of cattle, bedded down in the lush grass.
A few move now: now one heaves twice, and is standing,
Coughs its cud up; I hear the jaws calmly chewing.
Another cow stands up, I hear how the tongue laps out
And encircles grass, pressed against lower teeth, the ponderous
Head yanks, and grass with a tiny shriek gives way; I know
The muffled drooling grind of teeth, long swallowing throbs.
I hold my face to the herd, testing for warmth on eyes
And forehead: only the smell of hot grass, bodies, manure
The ghost of milk. With a shock I notice light on the river,
Or think I do, glimmering, and Magdalen Tower is there, is surely there.
I sit on the wall's top, and from heavy wisteria vines a chirp,
A sweet gurgle, just below me--a thrush, it slips from its perch,

Flies busily up into a tall elm of the garden, and is
gone.
Blackbirds will start up soon. Up on the second floor
Of St. Alban's a light goes on. That will be Gilbert
Bray,
My scout, washing up last night's china. I'd best look
in
And halt the damage with a shilling before I start,
sore-eyed
With vision flushed from this dark hour when I might have
slept,
To puzzle out fifty lines of Beowulf: that dark poem
Whose hero plunged into the monstrous deep and down,
All day, to the dim hall under the waves, there and found
The brilliant sword through the bones of her neck till a
great light
Flashed like heaven's candle and lit the hall, where he
walked,
While those fearful above saw the waters darkened with
blood,
And stared his fill upon the treasures of forgotten
kings.[2]

In "Merton Gardens" Revard wastes words on details, as the first three lines illustrate. Revard does succeed in giving the reader a feeling of what the experience was like, but as a poem, "Merton Gardens" does not work. It goes off in too many directions. It is a curious mixture of art and life that does not show any relationship between the two. Meister Eckhart's philosophy, Brueghel's painting, the meadows, cattle, china and Beowulf were all fragments of Revard's life. They do not cohere. They do not form a unified impression. Poetry that comes out of experience in the world is always more alive than poetry that comes out of art. Lines 27-36 are more effective as poetry than the rest of "Merton Gardens" because they flow out of Revard's experience. He observes the sound of the cattle closely. He describes the cows' eating so completely that this descriptive

section of the poem works. There are some remarkable images--"grass with a tiny shriek gives way" and "the ghost of milk"--in this section, but as a whole the poem does not work. It is too much a hodgepodge. It ends with a translation of some lines from Beowulf. Such academic poetry is rarely very rewarding reading, since it is almost always inferior to the art it comments on. Still there is evidence in "Merton Gardens" that Revard is intensely aware of the details of the environment and that his senses are keen. Revard knew about cattle from his work on his family's dairy farm. And in the few descriptive lines concerning the cattle, his Oklahoma voice comes through. But for the most part, as Revard has said, he was "not getting the voice out of the voice box."[3]

A few years later, when Revard was writing at Amherst, he began to write more concise, unified and careful poetry that was not so academic in subject and setting. His first published poem, "Dead of Winter" illustrates his improvement as a poet:

> What loss is there if you do,
> Freezing like me one snowed-on, blue
> And silver day,
> Neglect to look up when a winters' bluejay
> Shouts against the sky?
> The road's ice blazed, and I walked
> In a shower of sun-diamonds from ice-blue skies
> As lightly as
> The rubber clump of overshoes would let, because
> The cold with every step came through their soles.
> The crisp fire of white surrounding snow
> Sparkled and stung in reddened eyes.
> With each in-breath my nose grew dry,
> With every out-breath watered. It was so cold that I

Showed every sign of weeping, almost alone, in early
morning

But not quite. I heard the bluejay scream.
It must have paused among the dry ragged leaves
That clung on the huge oak where the road bent.
It would perhaps have been
The sky's blue come alive, and when it flew,
A crying, personal splash of blue
Alive on the dead brilliant snow.
I never looked, hearing it go;
I was reduced to wanting someplace warm.

I should have looked at her eyes, too,
But could not, leaving: they were blue.[4]

"Dead of Winter" creates a mood. The poet remarks about the fact that he failed to look at the bluejay, but instead was thinking of getting warm on a cold morning. To deny the eyes the pleasure of visual beauty is like being dead, the poem implies. Winter is a cold time. Poetically winter symbolizes a loss of emotion. And the narrator of the poem states a parallel between his not looking at the bluejay and not looking at the woman's blue eyes. Here he steels himself against feeling emotion.

The poem has some of the qualities of an English sonnet, though it is not in exact sonnet form. Some of the lines rhyme. The poem is divided into three stanzas--a long first stanza, almost double the length of an octave, a shorter second stanza of nine lines (like a sestet, a multiple of three) and an ending couplet. The form seems appropriate for this poem in which a rejection of nature follows a rejection of love. Like "Merton Gardens," this poem takes place in early morning, but unlike "Merton Gardens," this

poem is unified. "Dead of Winter" expresses an emotional experience in clear imagery. As a poem it works, but it is far less free in form than Revard's later poetry.

Revard wrote "The Coyote" about the time that "Dead of Winter" was published, spring of 1958. Revard has said, "It was almost like finding your vision." (Bross, p. 2) "The Coyote" is not entirely free in form; it is a fourteen-line poem, divided into octave and sestet, but it has no rhyme pattern, and although the lines do not vary greatly in length, neither are they regular in meter, rhythm or number of syllables. But more important than the formal difference from Revard's earlier poetry is the difference in content. "The Coyote" has a traditional subject. The coyote appears in more traditional American Indian stories and poems than perhaps any other animal. "The Coyote" is a spirit of place poem. And "The Coyote" is full of Oklahoma words. Revard has said, "I couldn't get anything written until I got an Oklahoma talk to it" (Interview). "The Coyote" indicates the direction of Revard's best poetry:

> --There was a little rill of water, near the den,
> That showed a trickle, all the dry summer
> When I was born. One night in late August it rained;
> The thunder waked us. Drops came crashing down
> In dust, on stiff blackjack leaves, on lichened rocks
> And the rain came in a pelting rush down over the hill,
> The wind blew wet into the cave; I heard the sounds
> Of leaf-drip, wet rustle of soggy branches in gusts of wind.
>
> And then the rill's tune changed: I heard a rock drop
> And set new ripples gurgling in a lower key.
> Where the new ripples were I drank, next morning,

Fresh muddy water that set my teeth on edge.
I thought how delicate that rock's poise was, and how
The storm made music when it changed my world.[5]

In the spring of 1958 Revard realized that he was gradually becoming deaf. He was listening to the rain falling on the roof, and he thought about how he liked hearing rain, realizing that someday he might no longer be able to hear it. He associated the sound with the memory of finding the coyote den and began to imagine how a coyote might hear rain (Interview). This act of the imagination is a natural part of the poetic process as it has developed in traditional American Indian literature and cultures. A sensitivity to animals and their feelings is strong in American Indian cultures. To understand the impact of rain on his life, Revard first had to perceive it fully with his senses. A human being sitting inside an apartment, drinking water that has been filtered and piped in cannot possibly have the close contact with the natural rain that a coyote living in a cave and drinking muddy water has. And yet, like the coyote, the human, even while living inside walls and drinking running water, is dependent on the rain. In "The Coyote" Revard is able to get back to the basic relationship between himself and the rain by recreating himself through the imagination, by perceiving the rain through the coyote's senses.

The poem is surrounded by the place of its being--Oklahoma. The "dry summer," the rain in August, the "dust," the "stiff blackjack leaves," the "lichened rocks," the

"gusts of wind" are all distinctive features of Oklahoma, where autumn is often like a second spring. "The Coyote" is not a "50-yard road" that goes nowhere; it has a purpose and meaning that transcend personal experience and philosophizing. It expresses the dependence of animals on rain and celebrates a transformation that occurs naturally, but that is so dramatic as to seem magical. The coyote says, "The storm made music when it changed my world." The poem was a dramatic beginning for Revard. He had found his voice.

"The Coyote" was published in The Massachusetts Review in 1960, along with "Behind the Hill," another poem set in the Buck Creek area where Revard grew up. "Behind the Hill" records the childhood adventure of exploring the wilderness behind Bockius' Hill. Revard gives the hill an awesome appearance:

> I remember that afternoon when we first came to the place
> Where Dough Creek runs into Buck Creek. We climbed
> Bockius' Hill
> Where it loomed on our west horizon like a huge green
> sun furred over with trees. (p. 632, ll. 1-3)

Exploring the wilderness is usually a bit frightening to children. And these children are "Quiet and scared," but only for a moment. There is so much to see beyond the hill.

The poem is profuse with details--a gypsy camp, a blue jay's feather, a feeling of animals hiding, a "breath of wind," a "crow's caw," a "bee-tree," a "big gray squirrel," a "cow-trail," a "bittern's cry," a "little sunperch," "blue-dark depths," a "monstrous bass," a "water moccasin." Three

children went fishing behind the hill. They "gave up fishing," but one of them carried back home with him the memory of seeing and hearing and tasting a multitude of natural things.

At the end of the poem, a water moccasin makes a dramatic appearance. But he does not disturb the children. Nor do they disturb him. They are all lying quiet in the sun at the end of the poem.

"Behind the Hill" bears some resemblance to D. H. Lawrence's poem, "Snake," in which a snake comes to a man's water-trough and looks up at him. The man, though he feels glad that the snake has come there to drink, acts according to his education, which has told him that he should kill snakes. The man finally gives in to his education and picks up a "clumsy log" to throw at the snake. He does not hit the snake, but causes the snake to convulse "in undignified haste." Lawrence ends his poem:

> And so, I missed my chance with one of the lords
> Of life.
> And I have something to expiate;
> A pettiness.[6]

Of course, Revard's poem is quite different from Lawrence's. The children do not throw anything at the water moccasin. They observe him as they have observed all the other things in the wilderness that day:

> . . . Down in the deep hole a monstrous bass
> Lunged at a dragonfly and missed with a vicious splash,
> And then, "Look," Jim said: Sister and I turned our heads,

Slithering and floating down Dough Creek was a water-
moccasin.
Soundless and gleaming dark in the sunlit water he was
carried
Near us, head up and eyes glittering so near we saw the
elliptic cat-pupils contracted to slits,
His shadow on the sand beneath him; he slid past the
edge of the sandbar
And out over the dark still pool he disappeared, but a
moment later
Crawled out on a rock, on the other side, and lay there
quiet in the sun. (p. 634, ll. 46-54)

The children are in harmony with the wildness that surrounds them. They are caught up in the spirit of that place.

Both "The Coyote" and "Behind the Hill" appeared later in a book of Revard's poetry, My Right Hand Don't Leave Me No More, published in 1970 by the EEDIN Press. Revard's was the second and last book EEDIN published. Revard has said the book "is about as attractive as a mangy billygoat."[7] He's right. It was put together by some of Revard's friends and has the appearance of being hastily done. At the same time, the collection does contain some good poems. Among them is "You Don't Have to Kill Them," a 170-line narrative poem about a coon hunt.

The appearance of the poem is prose-like. The long lines are dense:

December nightfall: flashlights, axe and gun
In Les' pickup, dogs riding behind;
Driving out north and west, past Sunset Lake--
Through cold moonlight into the rising hills,
The canyons black below their greylit ridges,
And once, miles back, a highway's tiny glitter
Down to the east. Headlights caught frozen ruts
In our gravelled road, woods black on either side
But snow white-glimmering under the quiet trees.
The moon rode high, circled with rainbow haze,

> And through the truck's back window I watched it sway
> With the winding road, and how the dogs lay moonlit
> On gunnysacks and hay in the jouncing truckbed;
> I sat in the heatered cab still and exultant
> Like a tongue plunged in honey and held quite still.
> (ll. 1-15)[8]

Revard is a patient writer who takes his time in describing experience accurately and thoroughly. I am not an advocate of long poems. Many modern poems, like Revard's "Merton Gardens," lack coherence partially because of their length. However, the experience of hunting in "You Don't Have to Kill them" is effectively conveyed in the long narrative.

The narrator is a boy who is sensitive to all the sounds, sights and talk around him. Since he is the smallest one on the hunt, he gets the job of climbing the tree to shake out the coon that the dogs have treed. Seeing the animal closely, he realizes the coon's feelings:

> The coon crouched flat on a high, high limb and stared,
> Alert and frightened, straight into my eyes. (p. 28, ll. 63-64)

The narrator respects the animal's struggle for its life as it clutches at the branches and fights against the three dogs.

There are a man, two boys and three dogs against one young coon. The hunt is 'for fun,' not out of necessity. Only the narrator, who notices the similarity of the coon's "frantic scream" to the scream of a dying baby, seems to feel the pain of killing the coon like this. The other hunters do not share the traditional American Indian respect for the animal killed. Les says, "Look at that monkey's

eyes a-shining!" (p. 29, l. 91).

Frank says, on the way home, that tomorrow will be a good day to go rabbit hunting, since the snow will stick. The narrator's mental response is "Drowsing, I saw blood scarlet on soft new snow" (p. 30, l. 139). Rabbits have a hard time getting around in the snow, and thus, are easy prey. The narrator says, "I've got homework," to get out of going. The night of the hunt was beautiful with its "cold moonlight" and falling snow. There is a stark contrast between this enchanting setting and the hunting and killing of the raccoon. The details related to the animal's capture and death romanticize neither the coon nor the hunt. Rather, by carefully selecting the right details, Revard captures the essence of the boy's experience. Revard's narration of the hunt through the boy's point of view enables the reader to experience it from a perspective sensitive to the raccoon's feelings. The hunt is shown so clearly, from the drive in the truck to the woods, to the end when the narrator gets out and trots home, that the reader is brought into the experience. Like Momaday's poem, "Angle of Geese," this poem shows sensitivity to an animal that is hunted and killed. The poem is appropriately titled, "You Don't Have to Kill Them," in the words of a boy who had a natural respect for the raccoon as a living part of the creation.

"You Don't Have to Kill Them" is like "The Coyote" and "Behind the Hill" in its detailed description of a place.

However, "You Don't Have to Kill Them" differs from the other two in its emphasis on people. The people's words and actions are as essential to the meaning of the poem as is the description of the place. Much of Revard's attention is on the people who live in the places he writes about. Carter Revard is able to express the spirit of place in Oklahoma because he is observant, not just of the details of nature, but also of the way people in Oklahoma look, act and speak. Many of Revard's poems dramatize people like the ones who were close to Revard when he lived in Oklahoma. These people are not always identified as being Indian or non-Indian. Many of Revard's relatives were of mixed blood. And Revard seems more concerned with communicating their personalities by dramatizing their speech and actions than with depicting their ethnicity.

Two of Revard's best poems of this type are "Support Your Local Police Dog" and "Coming of Age in the County Jail." Both poems are about people who have broken the law. Uncle Carter in "Support Your Local Police Dog" was a "character" who acted with more energy than brains. By describing what Uncle Carter did the night before he was shot, Revard brings him back to life in words:

SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL POLICE DOG

The night before my Uncle Carter got shot
Trying to hijack a load of bootleg whiskey,
He dressed fit to kill, put on his lilac hairoil,
And leaned down to the mirror in our living room
To comb the hair back over his bald spot, humming

'Corinne, Corinne, where have you been so long?'
I don't know if 'Corinne' tipped the other bunch off,
But I hope he put it to her before they killed him.
I bet if there was any he was getting his.
--Jesus, I never saw him standing still
Or lying down, till they led me past his coffin.
He should have been a lord in Boswell's time,
Though he'd most likely been laid up with gout
Before he was forty, had that kind of drive.
More drive than brains though. Hell, man out on parole
For robbing a bank, and his hip not very long healed
Where the cop in ambush shot him trying to surrender,
Had no more sense than go after, those bottled-in-bonders
From Kansas City. You KNOW they'd be in cahoots
With all the local crooks and laws. We couldn't
See why he'd let himself get talked into trying.
My Uncle Dwain said it was a put-up job,
Carter knew too much, the gang had him bumped off.

Well, the last time I was home for a visit,
Leaving behind these earnest city people
Who keep DISCOVERING crime and poverty
Like tin cans tied to their suburbs' purebred tails
Till they run frothing, yapping for law and order,
I thought of the big police dog Carter brought home
His last time there and kenneled by the chickenhouse:
Nobody was going to steal OUR stock, by God.
(Later the damn dog got to killing turkeys
On a neighbor's place; we had to let it be shot.)
--The gilt mirror he'd gazed at his bald spot in
Had been demoted, now hung dim in the bathroom.
I patted my Old Spice lather on and shaved
As suavely as he had combed, and smelled as good.
He never lived to grow white whiskers like mine;
I knew the smartest crooks don't ever need guns,
And I would never walk out into the night
To get myself shot down, the way he did.
I've got more brains. But while he lived, I admit
He was my favorite uncle; guts, charm, and drive.
He would have made a perfect suburban mayor--
Or maybe, manager for some liquor chain.[9]

This eulogy is in the same comical tone as the funeral in James Welch's novel Winter in the Blood. The descriptions of Uncle Carter putting on his "lilac hairoil" and combing his hair over his "bald spot" while humming "Corinne, Corinne" and of his bringing the police dog to guard the

chickens make the reader chuckle. At the same time, the poem is serious at bottom and full of irony, a pervasive ingredient in Indian humor.

Unlike the "bottled-in-bonders," the Kansas City outlaws who had enough money to pay the law to allow them to continue their bootleg business, Uncle Carter was a small-time operator. He relied on such unlawful acts as robbing banks and hijacking loads of bootleg whiskey for his survival--a dangerous business. Carter Revard does not idealize Uncle Carter, his namesake. The last three lines say that about the best he could have been would be a "suburban mayor or manager for some liquor chain." The lines imply that those two professions often involve illegal activities. Uncle Carter would have probably broken the law, no matter what his profession had been. But had he been a mayor or the manager for a liquor chain, he could have probably gotten away with it.

By objectively writing about his Uncle Carter, Revard presents the situation in its complexity. Criminals who are the accused are also often the victims. The smartest crooks don't need guns because they can pay someone to commit their crimes; they can even pay law enforcement officers to break the law for them. Rather than asking the reader to sympathize with Uncle Carter, the poem causes the reader to think about the hypocritical way that laws are enforced in this country. In its honest and humorous dramatization of Uncle

Carter, it is the best kind of eulogy for Revard's "favorite uncle."

Another of Revard's poems about renegades is "Coming of Age in the County Jail":

> --I see they worked you over. What you in for?
> --Oh, I took this kiddie-car out of a guy's back yard, Friday midnight.
> --What in the world gave you the idea for that?
> --Celebrate my birthday. Me and George decided we'd haul it up
> on top the Mound, ride down on that kiddie-car,
> see if we could finish off the wine on the way down.
> --That how you got the black eye and stiches, no doubt.
> --Not hardly. Turned out the guy whose yard we took it from
> was a city cop, he saw us put it in our car
> and start off down Mound Road.
> --Where'd they catch up with you?
> --We got out near the Mound and here came three patrol cars with sirens
> and red lights flashing, blocked off the road,
> big mob of police jumped out with guns.
> --How did the dialogue go after that?
> --Mostly we said 'ow' and 'that's enough.' I made the mistake
> of hitting back at a couple. After they got me down
> in back of the car with handcuffs on behind my back,
> they beat me on the shoulder blades with blackjacks.
> This cut in my eyebrow's from a pistol, though.
> --Yeah, looks like it. What are you charged with now?
> --There's a pretty good list of things they mentioned. Felony,
> for taking the kiddie-car, which the officer valued
> at over fifty dollars; then there's assaulting an officer,
> resisting arrest, driving with open bottle,
> disturbing the peace, so on and so on.
> --Well nobody wants to have his kid's things stolen, especially police.
> But maybe that lawyer can get the charge reduced
> to misdemeanor, once things cool down a little.
> They told me fifteen minutes was all I had,
> I'll start back now. Well, don't wander off.
> --No, I kind of think they'll let me stay till the hearing. Besides,
> the service here's just great, and gourmet cooking.
> Well, here's the man. Thanks for dropping in.
> (Voices, pp. 91-92)

This poem is in the form of a dialogue that takes place in the county jail. A man gets to celebrate his birthday in the county jail. The "crime" he and George committed was more a childish prank than a crime. Like Uncle Carter, the two acted with more energy than brains. But their punishment far outweighed their crime. Three patrol cars took out after these men who had stolen the kiddie car. Handcuffing the men wasn't enough for the police, who beat them with blackjacks and a pistol. The police are not charged with brutality; instead the two men are charged with "assaulting an officer" and "resisting arrest," in addition to the crimes of stealing the kiddie car, "driving with open bottle" and "disturbing the peace." Thefts of kiddie cars are seldom investigated. Most people who are caught driving with an open bottle or disturbing the peace are not held in jail. The reason why these men are in jail is that they stole the kiddie car out of a <u>policeman's</u> back yard.

The men in jail for stealing the kiddie car are not identified as Indians. But their escapade, similar to the escapades of Lame Deer, the police brutality used against them, their choice of the Mound as the site of their celebration and the speech of the man in jail give some indication that they may have been Indians. Indians have been frequently beaten and jailed in Oklahoma towns for crimes no worse than that of stealing a kiddie car. Revard's humourous poem exposes a serious law enforcement problem that exists

in Oklahoma and elsewhere in the United States.

Both "Support Your Local Police Dog" and "Coming of Age in the County Jail" are rooted in the place from which they emerged, by the speech of the people in the poems and by their settings. They reveal through character dramatization something of the spirit of the Buck Creek area.

The poems I have discussed thus far are only preliminary to Revard's more complex and universal poetry with a spirit of place theme. Many of Revard's spirit of place poems reveal his interest in British and American poetry. The poem "Another Sunday Morning" reflects both a childhood experience that made a strong impression on Revard and a reaction against the kind of poetry that Wallace Stevens wrote. Revard explains, "I set different kinds of war and peace visions together, partly because I've always been annoyed by Wallace Stevens ignoring wars and treating crucifixions as luscious pictures, partly because I think the green meadows just have to be allowed their screams as well as their singing. That's why tiger beetles and tiger tanks, and so on."[10]

At the center of Wallace Stevens' "Sunday Morning" is a woman sitting in a sunny chair. She dreams, and the poem is made up of her dreams. The imagery in "Sunday Morning" is beautiful:

> Shall she not find in comforts of the sun,
> In pungent fruit and bright, green wings, or else

> In any balm or beauty of the earth,
> Things to be cherished like the thought of heaven?[11]
> (Sec. II, ll. 4-7)

Stevens has carefully selected lush imagery. There is nothing ugly in the poem. Everything is in order. "Sunday Morning" exalts thought, rather than experience. The woman thinks of nature, but she is isolated from it.

In "Another Sunday Morning," Revard looks at a Sunday morning through a consciousness much different from the woman's in Stevens' poem:

ANOTHER SUNDAY MORNING

What I walked down to the highway
through the summer dawn for
was the Sunday funnies,
or so I thought,
but what I remember reading there
in the shadowless light
among meadowlarks singing
was tracks in the deep warm dust
of the lane where it parted
with its beige dryness the meadow's dew:
the sleek trail where a snake had crossed
and slid into tall grass;
the stippled parallels
with marks between them where
a black blister-beetle had dragged
its bulbous belly across
in search of weeds more green;
the labyrinth of lacelike
dimples left by a speed-freak
tiger-beetle's sprints that ended
where it took wing
with a little blur of dust-grains;
and stepping through the beetle-trails
the wedge-heels and sharp-clawed hands of a skunk-track
crossing unhurried and walking
along the ditch to find
an easy place for climbing;
not far past that,
a line of cat-prints running
straight down the lane and ending

with deep marks where it leaped
across the ditch to the meadow
for birds asleep or wandering baby rabbits:
and freshly placed this morning
the slender runes
of bob-whites running, scuffles
of dustbaths taken,
and there ahead
crouched low at the lane-edge
under purple pokeweed-berries
four quail had seen me,
and when I walked slowly
on toward them, instead
of flying they ran
with a fluid scuttling
on down the lane and stopped frozen
till I came too close
then quietly when
I expected an explosion
of wings they took off low and whispering
and sailed, rocking and tilting,
out over the meadow's tall bluestem,
cropped down and were gone until
I heard them whistling, down by the little pond,
and whistled back so sharply
that when I got back to the house
they still were answering
and one flew into the elm
and whistled from its shadows
up over the porch where I sat
reading the funnies while the kittens
played with the headlines
till when the first gold sunlight
tipped the elm's leaves he flew
back out to the meadow and sank
down into sun-brilliant dew
on curving wings,
and my brothers and sisters waked
by the whistling came pouring out
onto the porch and claimed their share
of the Sunday funnies,
and I went on to read
the headlines of World War Two
with maps of the struggling armies leaving
tank-tracks over the dunes of Libya
and the navies churning their wakes
of phosphorescence in the Coral Sea
where the ships went down on fire
and the waves bobbed and flamed
with the maimed survivors screaming
in Japanese or English until

their gasoline-blistered heads
sank down to the tiger-sharks
and the war was lost or won
for children sitting in sunlight
believing their cause was just
and knowing it would prevail
as the dew vanished away.
(Voices, pp. 84-86)

The narrator of Revard's poem is not isolated from nature or the outside world. Unlike the woman in "Sunday Morning," who spends the morning inside her head, dreaming, he has his senses attuned to the world. He remembers walking to the mailbox, reading the tracks of many different animals, whistling to some quail and reading the paper. The details of this poem are from life rather than art. The natural place with its abundant life is a sharp contrast to World War II. The boy reads about the horrors of war. Revard does not romanticize the pictures of the maimed, dying and dead soldiers. Death is not called the "mother of beauty," as it is in Stevens' poem. Revard remembers reading of the soldiers' "gasoline-blistered heads." In order to write honestly about that place, Revard had to take the turmoil in the outside world into account. The cause of the children, who rush out to read the funnies, to enjoy themselves on this Sunday morning, is far removed from the seriousness of war. Ironically, soldiers murder to protect beauty and innocence.

While Revard reacts against the poetry of Wallace Stevens, the poetry of William Blake and Gerard Manley Hopkins have been positive influences on his work. Their influence is especially apparent in "'But Still in Israel's Paths They

Shine!'" The title of this poem is the final line in the second stanza of Blake's poem which begins "Mock on, Mock on, Voltaire, Rousseau." In that poem Blake contrasts the view of the scientist to the view of the visionary. Scientists examine nature, culture, society with the mind, in order to reveal their characteristics, through a critical/analytical process; they make discoveries about the make-up of the physical world. They have discovered that tiny particles make up light and that tiny atoms make up matter. Their understanding is rational. It involves thought, rather than feeling. But a visionary looks at the world intuitively, and with feeling. Blake explains the perception of the visionary in the second stanza of "Mock on, Mock on, Voltaire, Rousseau." Scientists discover the qualities of matter, but if they look only at its physical characteristics, they are prevented from being affected by the whole symbolic meaning of nature. The symbolic significance of nature is the realm of the visionary poet.

The "sands upon the Red sea shore" in the last stanza of Blake's poem are at a place where a miracle occurred for the Israelites. The miraculous passageway enabled them to escape from bondage in Egypt. The importance of the story is its symbolic significance, not its scientific meaning or validity.

In his poem Blake alluded to Voltaire and Rousseau, social critics in the 18th century. While Blake agreed with

many of their criticisms of society, he chose the way of visionary art, rather than social satire, as a vehicle for expressing the need for social change; and his poem shows why Blake made that choice. He tells Voltaire and Rousseau that their mocking is all in vain. Spirituality and vision are needed if we are to create a better society.

Blake also alluded to Newton and Democritus, both great scientists--Democritus, the Greek philosopher of the fifth century A.D. who advanced the theory that the world was formed by the concourse of atoms, and Newton, the English philosopher and scientist of the late 17th and early 18th centuries, who did a great deal of research on light and motion. Blake's poem points out that while social analysis and scientific analysis are interesting intellectual pursuits, they affect no change without vision.

This truth speaks to us, in the 20th century, with full impact. The threat of the nuclear bomb looms because of people's lack of vision. Men in positions of power hold this scientific monstrosity over our heads and threaten to release it. The threat comes from people who are out of touch with nature, and who cannot see beyond their power mad notion that the way to survive is to constantly hold in their grasp the most destructive weapon imaginable. In order for science to be in our control, we must have some sense of morality and vision; we must experience a revolution in consciousness, what Blake called a "Higher Innocence."

Revard defines this revolution in "'But Still in Israel's Paths They Shine'":

Six hundred dark feet the cliffs
from the crash of Atlantic swells
beetle up over their surf
and its patches of seaweed tangling
the waves' drive shoreward
pulsed by the miles off gray
of storms
to this sunlit scene,
us seated on green headland
with slow-grazing sheep dotted whitely along
gentle slopes to the lighthouse
looking across that wave-thrash at blurred
rock-bands and strata holding
a million years of sleet and blossoms crushed
to a band of brown;
us thinking how
down on that shingle walking
we saw this morning the million
pebbles brought down from the cliffs' monochrome to lie
all streaked and dappled, spotted and milky and veined,
not one like another but all
rounded and smoothly
rubbing together in wetness; us
remembering how
down in the tidal pool's depths by the boulders
a powder-blue jellyfish was pulsing
upward and downward in that bluegreen clearness
as fragile as joy in time
yet riding the Atlantic's power;
us climbing down at noontime all
the way to the stream's mouth where
its last waterfall pours whitely down
to the cove and its peppersalt beach;
us seeing in noonlight how tiny crab-spiders sidle upon
sand-brilliants and
its grains rough-shaped on palms
as the cliffs where seabirds
soar and dive,
grains crowding like white
faces in terminal lobbies eroded
by grief and joy, pouring
from the hand like pieces
of broken planets tumbling and
flashing
in space;
us saying: the revolution we work for
is revelation and the eyes to see
these shining things and how
they change, and pass,
and are the same. (Voices, pp. 93-95)

The revolutionary can see with vision only if he or she sees the environment in which society exists. The revolutionary needs to see the life process. When one sees pebbles and sand with the eyes of vision, in the way that American Indians have seen them, when one feels at one with the landscape, he or she exists in a state of "Higher Innocence" and has "the eyes to see." As a result, the person's actions will reflect the person's inner consciousness. Vision will cause one to treat the land and all life with respect and understanding.

The secret to gaining this vision is, in Revard's eyes, a way of looking closely in order to notice the interrelated nature of the cosmos. Revard's poem echoes Blake's ideas and Hopkins' ideas and style, as these lines from Revard's poem illustrate:

> we saw this morning the million
> pebbles brought down from the cliff's monochrome to lie
> all streaked and dappled, spotted and milky and veined,
> not one like another but all
> rounded and smoothly
> rubbing together in wetness . . .

Revard echoes Hopkins' love for "dappled things" in "Pied Beauty." The preceding lines from Revard's poem echo the opening of "The Windhover" in their sound and their linking of nature with spirituality. Hopkins wrote:

> I caught this morning's minion, king-
> dom of daylight's dauphin, dapple-dawn-
> drawn Falcon, in his riding[12]

Revard has assimilated the best ideas and techniques of Blake and Hopkins. He brings them into the full experience

of "'But Still in Israel's Paths They Shine,'" which is set on the shore of the Atlantic. To have the "eyes to see," one must experience the spirit of place, and to experience the spirit of place, one must be aware of the place with the senses. Revard's idea in "'But Still in Israel's Paths They Shine'" is thus not uniquely an American Indian idea. Visionaries of many cultures have voiced the meaning of existence as they have come to understand it through a close observation of the intricacies of nature.

Vision and the spirit of place are much the same thing. They are creative acts of the imagination that result from immediate, often intuitive responses to environmental stimuli. The natural need to feel a spirit of place may make a person living in a technological society want to go back in time to a more natural environment. This longing appears frequently in poetry by American Indians. Part of the modern American Indian poets' interest in preserving the traditional oral literature of their tribes stems from a longing to preserve the old values and to return, if only through the imagination, to the old ways. The longing also stems from a learned appreciation and respect for nature, which emerges in a feeling of the spirit of place. One of Revard's best spirit of place poems is "Driving in Oklahoma":

> On humming rubber along this white concrete
> lighthearted between the gravities
> of source and destination like a man
> halfway to the moon
> in this bubble of tuneless whistling

at seventy miles an hour from the windvents,
over prairie swells rising
and falling, over the quick offramp
that drops to its underpass and the truck
thundering beneath as I cross
with the country music twanging out my windows,
I'm grooving down this highway feeling
technology is freedom's other name when
--a meadowlark
comes sailing across my windshield
with breast shining yellow
and five notes pierce
the windroar like a flash
of nectar on mind
gone as the country music swells up and
drops me wheeling down
my notch of cement-bottomed sky
between home and away
and wanting
to move again through country that a bird
has defined wholly with song
and maybe next time see how
he flies so easy, when he sings. (Voices, p. 80)

Revard has described "Driving in Oklahoma" in this way: "I did try to set the poem's two halves at balanced play, and the radio/bird contrast, 'country' musics of the two, ought to expand its meaning from sights to visions, sounds to music."[14] The first thirteen lines of the poem have an automobile as their setting. They describe a facet of life in the modern world that is ordinary to almost any Oklahoman. People's use of the automobile has drastically changed the face and character of the environment and people's sense of place. But there are still reminders of original nature that startle us out of our technological bubbles.

The meadowlark is a symbol representing the natural world. Its ease in flight gently mocks the freedom brought by technology, which is bought at increasingly higher prices

as oil prices rise, fuel supplies diminish and the natural environment becomes polluted. The meadowlark, a common bird in Oklahoma, often sails across in front of automobiles as they travel the highways. The meadowlark's song is "like a flash/of nectar in mind" in its sound and because it brings the mind of the driver from a state of free wheeling to a feeling of insight. It reminds the driver of the beauty and wholeness of the earth as it was. Technology and science have enabled people to fly, but the meadowlark's flight is easy and natural. The meadowlark symbolizes the superiority of the natural creation to the artificial world.

While the first part of Revard's poem merely describes the sounds and impressions of driving, the second part of the poem is lyrical, musical and organic. However, though the narrator may want to "move again through country that a bird/has defined wholly with song," he knows that is not possible. In "Driving in Oklahoma," the spirit of place is expressed by both halves of the poem. Technology is an important part of modern life. Although we'd sometimes like to, we can't go back.

The poems I have discussed up to now contain concepts that are within American Indian traditions, but they are not Carter Revard's most distinctly American Indian poems. Revard's increasing consciousness of the meaning and value of his Osage identity has influenced him to write poetry that is a direct outgrowth of the oral tradition of the Osage

people. Such a poem is "Wazhazhe Grandmother":

--I-ko-eh, tha-gthi a tho.

> [HO-e-ga, literally 'bare spot': the center of the forehead of the mythical elk . . . a term for an enclosure in which all life takes on bodily form, never to depart therefrom except by death . . . the earth which the mythical elk made to be habitable by separating it from the water . . . the camp of the tribe when ceremonially pitched . . . life as proceeding from the combined influences of the cosmic forces.
> --Francis LaFlesche, A Dictionary of the Osage Language, 1932.]

They chose their alloted land
out west of the Agency
at the prairie's edge,
where the Osage Hills begin they built
their homestead, honeymooned there
near Timber Hill,
where Bird Creek meanders in
from the rolling grassy plains with their prairie chicken
dancing in spring,
built in a timbered hollow where deer came down
at dusk with the stars
to drink from the deep pools
near Timber Hill
and below the
waterfall that seemed
so high to me the summer
when I was six and walked up near its clearness gliding
some five or six feet down from the flat
sandstone ledge to its pools
she called it in Osage, ni-xe ga-thpe,
where the dark water turning into
a spilling of light
was a curtain clear and flowing, under
the blue flash of a kingfisher's diving
into the pool above the falls
and his flying up
again to the dead white branch of his willow--
the whole place was so quiet
in the way Grandma was quiet.
it seemed a place to be still,
seemed waiting for us,
though no one lived there by then
since widowed during the war she'd moved
to the place south of Pawhuska,

and why we had driven down there from Timber Hill, now,
I can't quite remember--
was it a picnic, or some kind
of retreat or vacation time
out of the August heat of Pawhuska?
The pictures focus sharp-edged:
a curtain of dark green ivy ruffled
a bit by breeze and water beside
the waters falling there
and a dirt road winding red and rocky
across tree-roots, along which, carefully,
my mother eased our rumbling Buick Eight
in that Depression year when Osage oil
still poured to float us into
a happy future--
but whether I dreamed, or saw real things in time,
their road, their house, the waterfall back in the
woods are all
at the bottom of Lake Bluestem now,
because Bird Creek,
blessed with a dam,
is all psyched out
of its snaggly, snaky self into a
windsparkling lake
whose deep blue water, the politicians promise, will soon
come piped into Pawhuska pure and drinkable,
filling with blue brilliance municipal pools
and sprinkling the lawns to green or pouring freshets
down asphalt gutters to cool the shimmering
cicada-droning fevers of August streets
even as
in Bird Creek's old channel under Lake Bluestem big
catfish grope slowly in darkness
up over the sandstone ledge of the drowned
waterfall, or
scavenge through the ooze of
the homestead and along the road where
the bride and groom came riding one special day
and climbed down from the buggy in all their
best finery
to live in their first home.[14]

In this poem Revard relates a childhood experience he had in a place that is gone. The homestead where his Osage grandmother had lived is only a memory. But the memory is beautiful, full of the spirit of place; and the poem is a reflection of Osage myth and history. This is the creation story

of the Wazhazhe group of the Osage people, as told to Francis La Flesche by Osage Chief Black Dog:

> Way beyond . . . a part of the Wazha´zhe lived in the sky. They desired to know their origin, the source from which they came into existence. They went to the sun. He told them that they were his children. Then they wandered still farther and came to the moon. She told them that she gave birth to them, and that the sun was their father. She told them that they must leave their present abode and go down to the earth and dwell there. They came to the earth, but found it covered with water. They could not return to the place they had left, so they wept, but no answer came to them from anywhere. They floated about in the air, seeking in every direction for help from some god; but they found none. The animals were with them, and of all these the elk was the finest and most stately, and inspired all the creatures with confidence; so they appealed to the elk for help. He dropped into the water and began to sink. Then he called to the winds and the winds came from all quarters and blew until the waters went upward as in a mist. Before that time the winds traveled only in two directions, from north to south and then back from south to north; but when the elk called they came from the east, the north, the west, and the south, and met at a central point, and carried the water upward.
>
> At first rocks only were exposed, and the people traveled on the rocky places that produced no plants, and there was nothing to eat. Then the waters began to go down until the soft earth was exposed. When this happened the elk in his joy rolled over and over on the soft earth, and all his loose hairs clung to the soil. The hairs grew, and from them sprang beans, corn, potatoes, and wild turnips, and then all the grasses and trees.[15]

In this creation story the elk acts as a transformer, bringing order to the creation. He drops into the water and starts the process by which the land appears. The story symbolically relates the life cycle. Like the elk in the story, elk are sources of new life. Seeds cling to their hair; some are planted in the earth when elk roll on the ground. When elk die, their bodies decompose and become part

of the soil, making land for the people to walk on. The life cycle constantly begins and continues. The creation story of the Wazhazhe people illustrates their feeling of unity with the earth, their spirit of place.

Revard's "Wazhazhe Grandmother" is a personal version of the creation story. It is the result of a man's looking for the source of his own origin. In writing this poem, Revard was continuing the development of the oral tradition of the Osage people. Francis La Flesche wrote in The Osage Tribe Rite of the Chiefs that each gens or subgens of the Osage tribe had its own mythical life-story, its life symbol or set of life symbols.[16] "Wazhazhe Grandmother" is, in a sense, the life-story of Revard's family.

The whole Osage tribe is known by the name "Wazhazhe," and Wazhazhe is also the division of the Osage tribe which represents the waters of the earth. Revard introduces the poem with a definition of "Ho-e-ga," an Osage word which means, among other things, "the earth which the mythical elk made to be habitable by separating it from the water" and "the camp of the tribe when ceremonially pitched." The relationship between the meaning of Ho-e-ga and Revard's poem is analogous to the relationship between the tribal and personal stories. To further demonstrate the relationship between the tribal and personal stories linquistically, Revard has written after the title of the poem, "--l-ko-eh, tha-gthi a tho," which means in Osage, "grandmother, you have come home." By

including Osage words in his poem, Revard acknowledges their importance, as a source of the poem, "Wazhazhe Grandmother." The Osage words are a continuation of the Osage tradition and an acknowledgment of the importance of the Osage language in traditional Osage life.

Revard's poem begins with his grandmother and grandfather choosing "their alotted land." For more than a century before they were "discovered" by Marquette in 1673, the Osage people had lived at the head of the Osage River in what is now Vernon County, Missouri. They began relinquishing their land in 1806, when Captain Zebulon M. Pike visited the Osage people in their villages on the Little Osage River. They ceded large portions of their land in 1808 by treaties with the U.S. Government. A treaty of 1825 forced them to give up their home along the Osage River and move to a reservation in Kansas. In 1870, after forty-seven years in Kansas, they were again uprooted, this time by an act of Congress, and forced to give up their homes in Kansas and move to what was then Indian Territory, Osage County, Oklahoma, which is the present home of the Osage Nation.

The land allotted to Revard's grandparents by the Indian agency was similar in some ways to the ancient home of the Osage people. Like their ancient home, their home in Osage County was surrounded by hills. The Osage people had lived in the valley near the Little Osage River. They had considered the hills around them holy because they held the

graves of their ancestors. Revard's grandparents chose a "timbered hollow" amidst hills, with Bird Creek meandering through it. The memory of the homestead reveals that it was a beautiful place, full of life--prairie chicken, deer, kingfishers. The "deep pools" remind one of the pool the mythical elk formed when he sank. The land around the pools is a smaller version of the land the elk made habitable.

When he was six Revard began to be aware of the creation--the land, water, animals, willow trees, silence--on this homestead of his grandparents. As a child, Revard experienced the spirit of that place. The memory is of a time when Revard went with his family to the old homestead. He has forgotten just why they went, but he remembers the land. He also remembers riding in their "rumbling Buick Eight" and the "Osage oil" that supplemented the family's income. Both the automobile and the money-producing oil are symbols of the technological, capitalist society, which has replaced the Osages' old way of life.

The land where Revard's grandmother had lived had become part of the way his family defined themselves. He associated it with his origin. But, Revard tells us, now the land is "at the bottom of Lake Bluestem." The creation story of the Osage people has been reversed by a technological society which values convenience, sports and green lawns more highly than land that is wild and alive. Now the land that was separated from the water by the mythical elk is again under

water. The original process of creation which had resulted in a timbered hollow with meandering Bird Creek, deep pools and a waterfall has been nullified by a dam. People have moved off the land into Pawhuska where water will be piped in for drinking, to fill municipal pools and to water lawns. Today, people fish and ski over the old homestead. In a subtle way, Revard's poem shows how the beauty and natural variety of the land of his origin has been destroyed by sameness. If grass grows on a lawn in Pawhuska as a result of Lake Bluestem's water, what is that green lawn compared to the variety of life in the old homestead? By comparing the home of his grandmother to the lake that has replaced it, Revard shows how the ease-producing technology which makes dams possible also destroys the spirit of place.

The sameness and mediocrity of a series of green lawns and swimming pools, all conforming to the values of middle-America--all just alike--evoke no spirit of place. They symbolize materialistic, rather than spiritual or human values.

Carter Revard is planning to help revise Francis La Flesche's Osage dictionary. Of this project, Revard has written, "If I keep up the momentum maybe I will do my tribe and myself some good yet, bring the wild berries to the tame tables, help keep some places where the wild berries can grow."[18] Revard's work on the Osage dictionary may have led him to an increased interest in the oral literature of the Osage people. The word, "hó-ega," is included in a poem he

has recently written, "'People From the Stars'":

"PEOPLE FROM THE STARS"

(John Joseph Mathews, The Osages, Chapter 1)

Wazhazhe come from the stars, and by
our own choice, not by falling
or being thrown out of
the heavenly bars like Satan
into Europe, and
we are invited back
whenever we may choose to go.
But we long since have joined the people of death
and moved with them to another village
(we call it, hó-ega)
where time began; we made our fire places
and made our bodies of
The golden eagle and the cedar tree,
of mountain lion and buffalo, of the
redbird, of black bear and of
the great elk and of thunder so that we
may live to see old age
and go back to the stars.
Meantime, the Europeans pay us royalties
for oil that lights these midnight highways
that keep the land tied down
with star-strings through the night.
We trade our royalties for time enthroned
on wings of shining metal
to look down at the stars beneath
or up at stars above
before we touch down in the desert
creation of Las Vegas and wheel off
to shoot craps, at the Stardust Inn
and talk of Indians and their Trickster Tales,
of Manabozho, and
of Wounded Knee.[18]

"'People From the Stars'" is thematically similar to "Wazhazhe Grandmother." Revard writes from a contemporary perspective. He includes highly appropriate symbols of the technological, materialistic society that controls the land, hó-ega, that is the home of the Osages and the rest of us. The "wings of shining metal" fly the Osage poet to Las Vegas,

center of neon lights and conspicuous material waste. The oil beneath Osage land is being used up to fuel the Cadillacs that park in front of Las Vegas casinos. And the modern Osage finds himself somewhere between a meaningless game of chance in an artificial place in the desert and the stories and history of the American Indians. The poem dramatically juxtaposes the Wazhazhes' conception of themselves as having come from the stars and the Star Dust Inn.

Revard includes elements of the modern landscape and present society in his poetry. His poems are honest and alive. They do not romanticize the spirit of place or the Osage people. Rather they point out the difference between the Osages' traditional conception of the creation and the world they now live in. The power of the imagination enables Revard to write, "we are invited back/whenever we may choose to go," affirming the spirit of his people.

"Wazhazhe Grandmother" and "'People From the Stars'" reflect Revard's growing interest in his Osage history and traditions. He has written several other poems which reflect this interest and other aspects of American Indian life and culture. Among them is "Discovery of the New World," the science-fiction poem based on American history which I discussed in chapter one. Two others, which are results of Revard's interest in American Indian history and life are "Ponca War Dancers" and "After Wounded Knee."

"Ponca War Dancers" is the title poem of Revard's book of poetry which will be published soon by Point Riders Press of Norman, Oklahoma. "Ponca War Dancers" is a long poem written to honor Shonga-ska, a great Ponca dancer, just as "The Gourd Dancer" was written to honor Mammedaty. But "Ponca War Dancers" is quite different from Momaday's poem. Momaday chose to look back to a time when the Kiowas were still able to observe their traditions in relative purity. The ceremony in "The Gourd Dancer" is carried out in a setting that contains none of the realities of the modern world. Momaday's poem is beautiful, but it describes a time that is past. Momaday's poetry ignores the present-day struggles of American Indians to keep their land and way of life. Revard brings present-day settings and present-day American Indian leaders into his poetry with American Indian themes:

PONCA WAR DANCERS

1.

When Uncle Gus came to visit
his nephew Buck's new wife
she was so polite and nice
he really liked her very much,
but she talked directly to him
and that's not right
in Ponca ways.
still, he just ignored her efforts
at conversation
or spoke to Buck for her,
until one day
with Buck at work
she asked him to carry groceries
into the house--
and that was when he quietly
left Kansas City;

and she couldn't figure out
what she had done
till finally our Aunt Jewell told her.

2.

He was the greatest of Ponca dancers
yet when he came to see
some of my white uncles
and they went off to drink
how come I never understood
he was a champion
but saw a heavy-bellied
quick-talking man
that kids swarmed round,
full of jokes and laughter,
never seemed to brawl or argue--
till at the Osage dances one June
when he was sixty-something
I saw him dance for the first time
and everybody got quiet
except to whisper
'the champion'--
and here came Uncle Gus
potbellied but quick (my God!) footed,
twirling and drifting,
stomping with
hawkwing a-hover then
leaping,
like a leaf in a whirlwind with
anklebells shrilling,
dancing the Spirit's dance
in a strange land where
he had gone and fasted
and found his vision
to lead his people
but had nowhere to lead them except
into white ways
so here he danced
in Wahkondah's circle
drum at the center
the old songs being sent up
in the brilliant bugfilled light
among bleachers and tourists
and the grave, merry faces
Osage and Ponca, Otoe and Quapaw,
Kaw and Omaha, Pawnee, Comanche and Delaware
who saw what he was doing
and how he did it well even though
to the white eyes watching he
was an old Indian slowing down

and between dances going
to have another drink of
hell, maybe Old Crow or even
Canadian Club
good enough for the Champion.

3.

They held his memorial feast
and dance in March
a year after Wounded Knee
down in Ponca City, an auditorium
(White Eagle grounds being used
for another Ponca funeral)--
I went with the sons and daughters of his sister
Jewell
all strong in AIM
just back from a confrontation in Pawnee town,
Carter and Craig and Buck and Serena
(two underground now
from Wounded Knee, and the helicopters sweeping
the Okie hills once more for them
as in the Thirties agents in V-8's were speeding
the back roads after their dad where he was hiding
down by Buck Creek (catching catfish) on
bootleg charges: think
of that 'Gatsby' bunch that were just then founding
their family fortune up in Canada by making
and running the same white lightning (with caramel
flavoring)
down to-who was that Irish guy in Boston?
and marrying off in the Seventies to English
'aristocracy' while
Uncle Woody was thumbing from California
eastward to join his sons
at Wounded Knee)--
and with Uncle Johnny's daughters
and Stephanie from Third Mesa,
with Geronimo and Mickey and
Big Jim my brother
and Mary Ann teaching us Cherokee
all singing Forty-Nine songs in my old Dart
on the way
to Uncle Gus's dance:
'Let's all go up to Porcupine,
Everyone's there in summertime,
We will dance the Forty-Nine,
We will have a damn good
time . . .'
while the state patrolman kept tailgating me
just waiting for a 'traffic violation'

to nail these militant Indians good--
we kept the wine in the trunk so they could
not possibly get us for driving
with open bottle--
it was getting dark and I of course
was scared shitless wondering
if we'd get shot
by troopers or by FBI
or by some 'skins that had been
lied to or bought or blackmailed;
but Carter and Craig and Buck were cool as
Joe Namath setting up--
'Damn, Mike,' Buck said, 'Ever time I see you
somebody's all set to shoot us--
out at Sunset Lake in '52,
up at Wounded Knee in '73,
now here in Ponca country--
why don't you ever come see us
when things are peaceful so
we can talk about old times?'
'Aw shit, Buck,' I said, watching
the rearview mirror,
'I only hope we live to talk
when <u>these</u> times are old!'
But near the auditorium the trooper
turned off and we all
piled out and went in to Uncle Gus's feast
where all the Ponca women there
had fixed the frybread, lots of boiled beef
(not slow elk, we heard) and piles of fruit
and Jello and all,
and we ate till our bellies were crammed fuller
than Santa Claus's sleigh.
The Osage drum had been brought out of mourning
to honor Uncle Gus, and the Osage War Dancers
had come to dance for him;
then when the Ponca singers
sang the McDonald song his
nephews and nieces danced slowly round
tall and straight and proud--
it was a good time there and we gave
all that we could away, blankets and
shawls and food
(I won a big box of groceries
in the drawing, and gave them away)--the only trouble
came up when Buck's girl got mad at his giving attention
to someone else and she took
his gun and hid it, but
she told me where it was and I quietly
went and recovered it--

nobody got shot or busted that
night
and toward the end of the
dancing
an old white cowboy wandered over half-lit
to where I stood behind the bleachers
and watched the war-dancers awhile
then said to me offhand,
'They're good, but they won't ever be as good
as Gus McDonald.'
I told Carter what the cowboy had said
when we sat later back in a corner
near closing time in a Ponca City bar, watching
the door
and wondering who was sober enough
to stay on the right side back to Stillwater that night--

'How about that?' Carter said quietly:
'Uncle Gus was the best all right.
Mike,
they'll nail me sometime
for Wounded Knee--
I know it, I'm prepared long since.
But I'm back with my people now.'

Oh sure, they've nailed him now: caught him in Chicago
finally,
I was just glad when I heard he hadn't been murdered
and heard that he'd serve his time
in a FEDeral pen--
in Terre Haute, Indiana.
INDIANa, by God.
IndiANa, man. And only
three years.
For disarming a postal inspector: that was the charge.
Neither snow nor sleet nor Ponca warriors
must stay the appointed rounds of those
who bring Junk Mail to Wounded Knee that tells
how to become Horatio Alger on
the Pine Ridge Reservation, man.
To TOUCH those guns is worth three years in prison....

4.

SHONGA-SKA--that was Uncle Gus's name.
His niece Serena put it up
on her Indian Crafts shop
out in Porterville California,
run by her and her husband
for as long as people will buy
and run, by God,

of the people
by the people
and for the people
who shall not perish from the earth--
not even if they have to use
white words like these
to keep the Ponca ways in mind:
and me not being much of a warrior,
cousins,
Aunt Jewell,
I've made you this as my memorial song
for Shonga-Ska,
greatest of Ponca dancers,
to dance once more:
where Poncas are in prison
the songs are with them,
how can the bars stop singing
inside their heads?
For those who saw him dance
and learned from him the Way,
he is dancing still.

Come to White Eagle in the summer time,
Indians dance in the summer time--
he is back with his people now.[19]

Revard's strengths are his attention to detail and his honest intelligence, wit and irony. Refusing to romanticize, he brings the present, along with the past, into this poem. To tell what Ponca life is like now, he must include "white ways" and the harrassment of AIM leaders by the police.

The poem is narrated from the point of view of Mike, who seems to be Carter Revard. It begins with memories of what Uncle Gus was like. Part one establishes that Uncle Gus was a traditional Ponca, who kept to tradition not only when dancing, but always, or at least when it suited him. Uncle Gus liked "his nephew Buck's new wife," but he kept the old Ponca custom of not speaking directly to her.

Revard's poem makes evident the sexist nature of the roles women and men accepted in traditional Osage culture. He begins the poem to honor Shonga-ska with a memory of his behavior that is sexist. Revard's poetry does not romanticize Osage life and culture. He presents the Osage as they are, without idealizing the past and without pretending they can continue the good traditional ways without modification.

Uncle Gus is not idealized. He seemed no one special when he came to see Revard's white uncles and went off to drink with them. The child "saw a heavy-bellied/quick-talking man/that kids swarmed around." Uncle Gus was a champion, who did not hold himself aloof from people. At the end of part two, Revard describes his dancing "the Spirit's dance." Despite his pot belly, Uncle Gus is "twirling," "drifting," "stomping," "leaping" in the dance. But ironically, Uncle Gus, despite his vision and his wonderful dancing, is trapped. He has "nowhere to lead" his people, "except/into white ways."

His dancing has the power and beauty of the past as he dances in "wahkondah's circle." But Revard does not just focus on the dance; he includes the "brilliant bugfilled light," the "bleachers and tourists" in his description. And he also includes the "grave, merry faces" of the people of various tribes and the "white eyes" watching. Uncle Gus has a drink of whiskey between songs. Revard brings in that detail too. Of course, drinking is not an old tradition of

the Poncas. Uncle Gus, the greatest of the Ponca dancers, is not immune to "white ways."

The first two parts of the poem are preliminary. The occasion from which the poem arose was a memorial feast held for Shonga-ska, Gus McDonald, in March of 1974. Revard drove to the feast with the sons and daughters of Gus's sister, Jewell, "all strong in AIM." Helicopters would sweep the "Okie hills" for them the next year. Revard draws an analogy between them and their dad, whom "agents in V-8's searched for in the thirties." Since Uncle Woody joined his sons at Wounded Knee in '73, to stand up for Indian rights, he is presented in strong contrast to the big-time bootleggers who got rich as a result of prohibition. He and his sons stood against a system that was used against them.

The ride to the memorial feast is a mixture of conversation, description, memories and song. As they drive, singing Forty-Nine songs, they are followed by a state patrolman. Revard is scared. Not being a warrior, he is not used to this. But Carter, Craig and Buck are cool.

At the auditorium they eat the traditional Indian fry-bread and boiled beef and Jello, a packaged American food that has also become a traditional food for down-home feasts. They dance and have a big giveaway. Revard includes not just the ceremony, but the trouble between Buck and his girl.

Most of the poem is a prose-like narrative, describing the life of these Poncas. But the sections of the poem that

describe Shonga-ska's dancing are lyrical; the endings of sections two and four, the ceremonial sections of the poem, have a look and sound of spinning and whirling as they speak of the singing and dancing of the Poncas. It is appropriate that Revard has varied his style to fit the substance of the poem.

It is also appropriate that Revard has gone back and forth--from history and tradition, represented by Shonga-ska, the greatest of the Ponca dancers, to young Ponca warriors of the present, who are strong in the American Indian Movement. The Dream Wheel of the Ponca people is carried by dancers like Shonga-ska political leaders like Carter, Craig, Dwain and Serena Camp and poets like Carter Revard. The poem focuses on Shonga-ska because he is a symbol of the Ponca Way.

"Ponca War Dancers" is similar in theme to Laurence S. Fallis's poem, "Geronimo: If I Must Die in Bondage." Both poems assert that a man who had a strong sense of identity with his people and their home still exists with them after death. Revard writes, "he is back with his people now."

Of Revard's poems growing out of the history of the American Indians' relations with the U.S. Government, the most complex and explicit is "After Wounded Knee: White Bicentennial, Red Millennium."

AFTER WOUNDED KNEE:
WHITE BICENTENNIAL, RED MILLENNIUM.
(We-to^{n} Wa-o^{n})

This piece
is for all who stand,
warriors and women and children,
against the stone-eyes still:
for Carter and Dennis, and Stan, and Craig, for Crow Dog
and Russell, for Mickey and Victorio,
for Stephanie and Sundance Woman,
for Mike and Serena, for
Aunt Jewell and Uncle Woody and all the Poncas
wherever you read these words.

1.

From California driving eastward
in 1968,
the long roads eastward were black,
the wheels need roads and roads need oil,
so whatever color the land was,
what ever color the roads of Black Elk's vision,
we drove along black roads eastward
a hundred and ninety-two years behind
the start of our Indian Problem, and who knows yet
how many years before
its Final Solution:
a smooth black road,
but we pulled off and parked
in the blue day wisped with clouds
we hiked through brown grass up towards
what some call Devil's Tower
and looked up to its top, seeing through pine limbs
sun's light dazzling in the wings
of a high ferruginous hawk that balanced between
his cloud-puffs, looking down from his blue
watchtowers of wind that passed by, leaving
the land free.

2.

But we went driving on eastward
into the Black Hills, Paha-Sapa, to see those four
Great White Fathers staring
with stone eyes down:
Big George, who laid his sharp
surveyor's lines across a Virgin State
and hauled in half a continent's
dark and bloody ground;

Slick Tommy Jeff, who swapped a French dictator
some paper with pictures on it for
a million squared-off miles
with Indians on them here and there
just squatting, less important than
the REAL estate they didn't know existed;
then Honest Abe, whose civil warriors learned
their scorched earth policy while looting
with Sherman to the sea and found
that wiping out those savage women and babies
came easy after killing
rosy Confederate babies--
it wasn't, of course, Sherman, or Sheridan,
but only the Reverend Chivington who told his men
before Sand Creek,
'Kill and scalp all; nits make lice.'
and THAT
he'd borrowed from Cromwell,
or so I've been told--
Sherman, being more humane, said only;
'The more we kill this year,
the less will have to be killed next war;
all have to be killed
or kept as paupers--their attempts
at civilization
are simply ridiculous.' Of course, old
Sherman knew what such attempts were like.
having just participated in a war
in which four hundred thousand whites were killed by whites
to settle whether they
should keep black slaves: and as he said,
in that most civil war of civilized Americans,
those bleeding Eastern hearts who felt that cavalry
ought not to ride down helpless fleeing women carrying babies
among the tepees,
those bleeding hearts had been quite willing
to shell Confederate houses:
'Did we,' asked Sherman,
'cease to throw shells into Vicksburg or Atlanta
because women and children were there?'
to which rhetorical question, as we know,
the answer history gives is NO:
and the great Commander-in-chief
who was presiding over all this civilized behavior,
who was himself dispatched one night
by a sneaking treacherous white warrior named,
let's see,
Sic Semper Tyrannis, or . . . well, that great
Martyr and President,
old HONEST ABE, he now

looks whitely down from his Black Hills
on golden tourists,
looks from beside his colleague
old Pearltooth Teddy, he
of the splendid little wars on grizzly bears
and Filipinos,
trust-busting Teddy who grinned and sliced
the heads off Standard Oil,
which grew new Rockefellers twice as fast
to help the Vanishing American turn
pure white and vanish under
the strip mines' overburden--
Four of our country's finest, our
Great White Fathers casting down from the hills
their eyes upon motels and museums where
Oglala women sold real Indian curios,
but where one woman gave me,
GAVE me,
a booklet on the '68 treaty when
she found I was part Osage and knew
those hundred-year-old horrors of the White House,
gave me her booklet under
the dead stone faces carved there from
the living rock of a land that Presidents 'granted' her people
then 'took away'--
'Listen,' she said,
'there's going to be things happening here,
we're not putting up with what we used to, now,
some of us people want to work
for justice still,
you wait and see, our backs are to the wall.'

3.

Where Crazy Horse is hiding no white man knows
the sign at the turn to Wounded Knee says that,
so when the FBI come crashing through the doors
into Sioux homes
they don't know whoM to arrest
so they burn rubber after the nearest pickup with Indians,
they kill Crazy Horse, Pedro, Anna Mae,
over and over,
once more Oglalas mourn their children
in this centennial year of 1976
this hundred years after George Custer fell:
the difference is that now
his troops have helicopters
to herd Oglalas up against
their brothers' bayonets, but now
as then the 'Indian Scouts' are hunting down

their tribal brothers, in the name
of law and order shooting into
their sisters' homes where children
lie on the floor in terror,
once more the whisky bottles leap from half-drunk hands
into the clear blue sky and shatter
when the Goon Squad open fire and laugh,
'That's Russell Means,
now this one's Carter Camp.'
And the vigilantes, with their
C-B radios, track all the Indian cars that travel through
the cowboys' land, they always
know which cars hold a girl they've raped,
these three years after Wounded Knee,
this Bicentennial Year,
year of the Freedom Train.
This year you're starting your second year in jail,
cousin Carter,
that's what you get,
for standing for Oglalas there
at Wounded Knee,
you and the warriors, women and children too
who looked into the guns of the APC's on the hills
surrounding you in your trenches
and held your ground
and might have made even Nixon listen,
had not the media turned
their peacock's eyes on Watergate,
that March 25th,
rolling the cameras up and out of Wounded Knee and back
to Pine Ridge past where we watched
at Wilson's roadblock,
watched with our press-passes that great glass eye
just winking out while the whisky-bottles
exploded in air.
They shoot down warriors who stand, Carter--
Black Kettle stood for peace
and Custer shot him down,
and the media called it then, as histories do even now,
the BATTLE of the Washita,
Custer charging at dawn
a Cheyenne village at peace
in the treaty-given land
in Indian territory,
the troopers killing their hundreds
there in the snowy dawn,
slaughter for Custer's glory,
great gold-haired Indian-fighting
hero that he was.

4.

Still, back in '68, when we drove eastward
on through Pine Ridge and past
the turnoff to Wounded Knee where the smooth black road
unrolls into the sky,
even there we saw
still moving freely
where Black Elk saw them the thunder beings riding
their dark electric horses,
that whole afternoon we drove
towards one, through the shimmering August heat where
it grew and flashed and darkened, we saw
the double rainbow come out slowly, spread and brighten until
we passed beneath it into rain
near Crow Dog's Paradise and still ahead
in the beating rain that great Badlands rainbow
went dancing over the earth
of Crazy Horse who sways beside his
rainbow dancing slowly back into the roots
of corn and squash and beans, re-membered earth
and sky still dancing there
so far north, miles along the
dark-shining asphalt roads from where
in the cold dawn on Sand Creek
facing the troopers' fire
White Antelope stood and sang his death-song,
'Nothing lives long except
the earth and the mountains,'
sang till they shot him down,
between their bullets he sang,
and the bullets left his song,
left the earth and the mountains where he,
with his Cheyenne heart,
stands,
with his people,
still.[20]

Wounded Knee is one of the most important places in the history of the American Indians' relationship to the U.S. Government. It was the site of the Wounded Knee Massacre of 1890, in which 300 Sioux people were disarmed and killed by the 7th Cavalry; and it was the site of the most dramatic recent conflict between American Indians and the U.S. Government, the occupation of Wounded Knee in 1973.

We-to^{n} Wa-o^{n}, in parentheses after the title of the poem, means "songs of sympathy and encouragement." The poem is a re-telling of American history from Revard's point of view. It was written for the people who carry on the traditions of their American Indian ancestors, standing up against the "stone-eyes" who would exploit American Indians, destroying their land and cultures, for a profit. Revard's poem is dedicated to people like Carter Camp, Dennis Banks, Leonard Crow Dog and Russell Means who stood for the rights of the Oglala Sioux people at Wounded Knee in 1973. And he has written the poem for all the people those leaders represent, among them, "Aunt Jewell and Uncle Woody and all the Poncas."

The poem has four parts. In the first part Revard writes of driving eastward from California and stopping to look at Devil's Tower, a natural monument, Tsoai, sacred to the Kiowas. In this first part, the black road, which represented death and the coming of the white settlers in Black Elk's vision is Revard's way of getting to the place where he sees the ferruginous hawk balancing in freedom. This first part of the poem, in which the narrator relates to nature, feeling the spirit of place, is a contrast to part two.

In part two, Revard and his family drive eastward to the Black Hills to see Mount Rushmore, not a natural, but a man-made monument. Emphasizing the word white throughout this section of the poem, Revard strikes out at the racist

policies of the white-dominated U.S. Government. The "Great White Fathers" are a desecration of the Black Hills, which are sacred to the Sioux people. The carving out of their visages destroyed the natural beauty of the place. "The Great White Fathers" also remind the Sioux, Cheyenne and Arapaho descendants of the people who fought off the white people who invaded their lands that the white race sets itself up above them and the natural landscape. Revard describes George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt, summing up their effect on history. He does not idealize them as Mount Rushmore was meant to do. Rather, he points out their roles in colonizing.

"Big George," the surveyer, he says, was responsible for seizing half the territory which is now the United States from the Indians. "Tommy Jeff" bought the Louisiana Territory from France without bothering to consider the rights of the American Indians who were the real owners of the land where they lived. "Honest Abe," who presided over the Civil War, is not seen as a martyr in Revard's poem, but rather as the "Commander-in-Chief who allowed Sherman to march from Atlanta to Savannah destroying people and plundering their homes and property along the way. Without Sherman's military success in September, 1864 when he took Atlanta, Lincoln might not have been reelected. Politically, Lincoln owed much to Sherman, the ruthless invader of the South who had begun his career fighting the Seminoles in Florida and who

would go to St. Louis after the Civil War to work with the army to subdue the Indians so that the transcontinental railroad could be built in the West.

And finally, Revard exposes "Pearltooth Teddy." Roosevelt's antitrust campaign was a pruning, which did not destroy the trusts. In fact, Roosevelt was not opposed to all trusts. He believed that trusts were an inevitable part of industrial evolution and were socially desirable. His antitrust campaign was waged only against those trusts which he thought worked against the public interest. Such a position as Roosevelt's contradicts itself since monopoly capitalism takes the control of a nation's resources out of the people's rightful ownership and permits the monopoly to make exorbitant profits. Roosevelt's use of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act that had been passed in 1890 against the Northern Securities Company, U.S. Steel, Standard Oil and others and his efforts to regulate corporations were steps in the right direction, but they did not have a long-lasting effect. Roosevelt was like other reformers in the Presidency, in that he provided temporary relief, but no lasting cure for this society's problems.

As to foreign policy, Theodore Roosevelt believed that the strong survive. Revard refers to his most memorable actions emphasizing that attitude. During his rough rider days in the Spanish-American War, when Roosevelt was Secreary of the Navy, he and Senator Henry Cabot Lodge saw in

Manila Bay a base that might greatly enhance the sea power of the United States. The U.S. signed a treaty with Spain in 1898 in which Spain relinquished the Philippines to the U.S. For over three years the Filipinos carried on guerilla warfare against U.S. rule.

Roosevelt's corollary to the Monroe Doctrine denied other governments the right to intervene in Latin America, but sanctioned intervention by the U.S. in the role of international policeman. And Roosevelt encouraged a so-called revolutionary junta in New York, led by two representatives of the old French Panama Company, Philippe Bunau-Varilla and William N. Cromwell, who planned a Panamanian revolution. Roosevelt was tired of negotiating with Colombia and determined to take Panama with no further arguing.

Revard alludes to these facts of Theodore Roosevelt's administration to show that this "Great White Father," like the other three, carried out imperialistic policies that necessitated the deprivation of native people, who like the American Indian nations, became colonies, under the control of the U.S. government.

At the end of this second part of Revard's poem, a woman appears and gives him a booklet on the 1868 treaty. Just as the American public has been uninformed about the complex history of our presidential administrations, so have we been uninformed about U.S.-Indian policy, the U.S. Government's continuous denial of treaty agreements. In 1868 at

Fort Laramie, Wyoming, a treaty was signed between the Sioux people and the U.S. Government. The U.S. agreed to abandon its forts along the Bozeman Trail and to close the trail permanently. The Sioux agreed for the first time to boundaries on their lands. The treaty provided for an "unceded Indian Territory" from which whites were to be excluded, stretching from the Missouri River west through the Powder River hunting grounds into the Big Horn Mountains in Wyoming and from the Canadian border south into Nebraska. The treaty designated part of the territory, the western half of what later became South Dakota and a bit of North Dakota, to be the "Great Sioux Reservation."

But the U.S. did not abide by the treaty. Settlers and fortune hunters kept coming into the Sioux territory. After Custer led an expedition which confirmed that there was gold in the Black Hills in 1874, the U.S. sent a delegation West with authority to buy the Black Hills. More than 20,000 Sioux, Arapaho and Cheyenne people attended the council. Their leaders refused the offer. The U.S. government then claimed ownership of the Black Hills and the "unceded Indian territory" in direct violation of the 1868 treaty, which required 3/4 approval by 3/4 of the adult Sioux males for any change in the document.

From that point onward, U.S. Government actions continuously diminished the Sioux's land. By 1968 the American Indians of South Dakota were desperate. Deprived for so long

of their native way of life, which had depended on their hunting in the Black Hills, they had been colonized. Their land was a patchwork of white and Indian-owned property. Roughly one million of the remaining three million acres on the Pine Ridge Reservation was owned by whites. Having no other means of survival, about 80% of the Oglalas who owned land were forced to lease all or part of their holdings. People on the reservation were forced to send their children to BIA or mission schools where native dress, customs and language were forbidden, or their welfare and other benefit checks were withheld. Most businesses on the reservation were owned by whites, who charged higher prices than stores off the reservation. Life expectancy on the reservation was approximately forty-six years. Alcoholism and suicide were severe problems. The Sioux people had no political or economic control over their lives. They had been made a colony of the U.S. Government.[21] Nineteen sixty eight was the year when the American Indian Movement was founded.

In part three of his poem, Revard writes of the result of the desperation of the Sioux people, the Wounded Knee occupation of 1973. Revard explains the Indians' stand there from a personal perspective, since he went there during the occupation; he also relates the occupation to other events in U.S.-American Indian history.

Revard alludes to these events surrounding the occupation. Richard Wilson, tribal chairman of the Oglala Sioux,

called the FBI and U.S. Marshalls into the Pine Ridge Reservation in February of 1973. His move was in reaction to a fourth impeachment proceeding brought against him by three Oglala Sioux tribal chairmen, who were acting against Wilson's corruption in office. Wilson had refused to hold the regular tribal meetings, he had forbidden the Oglalas to hold dances and meetings, and he had hired a "goon squad" to brutally force his will on the people of the reservation.

The dissident Oglalas called on the American Indian Movement for support in their struggle against Wilson and the BIA. On February 27, 1973 these Oglalas and their AIM supporters drove from the Callico Community Hall to Wounded Knee and took weapons and hostages from the Wounded Knee store, then met at the Catholic Church at Wounded Knee to list their demands. The dissident Oglalas had, with the assistance of the American Indian Movement, taken over Wounded Knee. They listed their demands:

> I. Senator WILLIAM FULLBRIGHT to convene Senate Foreign Relations Committee immediately for hearings on treaties made with American Indian Nations and ratified by the Congress of the U.S.
>
> II. Senator EDWARD KENNEDY to convene Senate Sub-Committee on Administrative Practices and Procedures for immediate, full-scale investigations and exposure of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Department of the Interior from the Agency, reservation offices, to the area offices, to the central office in Washington, D.C.
>
> III. Senator JAMES ABOUREZK to convene the Senate Sub-Committee on Indian Affairs for a complete investigation on all Sioux Reservations in South Dakota.

People we will negotiate with:

1. Mr. ERLICHMAN of the White House.
2. Senators KENNEDY, ABOUREZK, and FULLBRIGHT-- or their top aides.
3. The Commissioner of the BIA and the Secretary of Interior;

The only options open to the United States of America are:

1. They wipe out the old people, women, children and men, by shooting and attacking us.
2. They negotiate our demands.

Signed:
Oglala Sioux Civil Rights Organization:
President VERN LONG
Vice-Pres. PEDRO BISSONETTE
Secretary EDDIE WHITE WOLF
American Indian Movement
Leader RUSSELL MEANS (Anderson, pp. 34-36)

The stand of these Oglalas was the beginning of a long siege in which there were shootings, firebombings, deaths, negotiations and blizzards. At Wounded Knee the Oglalas and their supporters set up their own government. Sporadic fighting between the dissident Oglalas and various contingents of the U.S. Government, which fought with Wilson and his Oglala supporters, continued until May. When the occupation finally ended with the disarming of the American Indians at Wounded Knee on May 8, nothing was settled. Federal marshalls and FBI agents remained on the reservation for months. AIM complaints went unnoticed. Dick Wilson continued his reign of terror. On October 17, 1973, Oglala civil rights leader, Pedro Bissonette, whom Revard refers to in his poem, was killed by BIA police shortly before he was to give testimony to prove Government misconduct. (Anderson, p. 260)

The U.S. Government brought court actions against more than three hundred people on charges stemming from the Wounded Knee occupation. Fewer than half of these people were brought to trial. And most cases which were brought to trial ended in acquittal or dismissal. Russell Means, Dennis Banks, Leonard Crow Dog and Carter Camp have all been tied up in the courts or held in jail on one charge or the other since their stand at Wounded Knee. None of their convictions has held up. The U.S. Government seems to have made a concerted effort to tie up the funds of American Indian people by forcing them to wage expensive court battles. After Wounded Knee, the FBI paid undercover agents, Doug Durham and Virginia De Luce ("Blue Dove") to infiltrate AIM in order to disrupt the movement. Informer/provacateurs have been another form of U.S. Government action to prevent AIM's actions for social change.

Anna Mae Aquash, who is mentioned in Revard's poem, had been planning to establish a people's history of the land to tell the true story of American Indian nations. On February 24, 1976, the FBI reported that they had found her body. The FBI took her to a coroner at Scottsbluff, Nebraska. He said she had died of exposure ten to fourteen days earlier. The FBI did not notify Anna Mae's family of her death until her body had been buried. When friends heard of her death, they asked a forensic pathologist to enter the case and obtained a court order to have the body released to the

custody of Bruce Ellison, an attorney with the Wounded Knee Legal Defense/Offense Committee for a new autopsy. The new autopsy showed that Anna Mae Aquash was shot in the back of the head, at close range, with a .32 or .38 caliber weapon. Such a finding implicates the FBI in the coverup, if not in Aquash's death.[23]

It is appropriate that Revard named Anna Mae, whose plan it was to write a new history from the American Indians' perspective, in his poem that does essentially the same thing. Anna Mae Aquash was one of the new leaders who, like Crazy Horse and Black Kettle before them, have stood for their people, risking and often suffering death.

Despite "the guns of the APC's" and the helicopters that were sent by the U.S. Government to end the Wounded Knee occupation, and despite the subsequent deaths and imprisonment of American Indian leaders, Wounded Knee, 1973 was a positive and significant event in American history. It showed that there was in the American Indians who stood there a fighting spirit and a determination to assert their rights. The American Indian Movement continues to stand for the rights of American Indians. And those rights are constantly being attacked.[23]

The fourth part of Carter Revard's poem asserts that despite the crushing of American Indian leaders like White Antelope, like the earth and sky, their spirits remain. American Indians like Crazy Horse and White Antelope live in

the hearts of their people because they exerted their strength for their people's right to live in harmony with nature. Words have power. Through poetry such as "After Wounded Knee" the truth about history can be brought home to us. Through such poetry the power of words can stand against the stone eyes. Such poetry can make people aware of the injustices that have been done to American Indians and their land. In his poems "Ponca War Dancers" and "After Wounded Knee," Carter Revard insists that the present be seen. He refuses to escape to the past. He shows present reality as it is related to past history, and he places people against the background of the natural land. Revard's poetry is less concise and in some ways less aesthetically perfect than N. Scott Momaday's, but it is at the same time more complex and more true.

Carter Revard's poetry is both visionary and satirical. In poetry that presents the social and political atmosphere in which American Indians have existed since European settlement, Revard combines intuitive and human responses to the spirit of the American landscape with probing criticism of the society that has been imposed on the land and its original inhabitants.

CHAPTER IV

THE SPIRIT OF PLACE IN THE POETRY OF SIMON J. ORTIZ

Simon J. Ortiz grew up at Acu, also called Acoma, a pueblo on top of a 357 foot stone mesa in western New Mexico. Acoma may have been built as early as A.D. 1150.[1] In August of 1540 when Captain Hernando de Alvarado and a Spanish exploration party arrived at Acoma, one member of the group called it "the greatest stronghold ever seen in the world." (Terrell, p. 88)

But despite its secure position, the pueblo of Acoma could not stand against gunfire. On January 23, 1599 the pueblo fell to Juan de Onate's soldiers, led by Vincente de Zaldivar. The Spanish soldiers killed some eight hundred Acoma, hacking off their heads and limbs and throwing them off the cliff. They took five hundred others to Santo Domingo, then capital of New Mexico, where Onate sentenced all the Acoma men over twenty-five to twenty years of servitude and to the loss of one foot. He prescribed various forms of servitude for the other survivors. (Terrell, p. 215)

But most of the Acoma who had been taken prisoner managed to escape, with the help of Navajo raiders; and by 1609,

they had returned to their mesa and had begun to restore their pueblo, much of which had been burned by the Spaniards. (Terrell, p. 240)

In the 1620s the Acoma received Fray Juan Ramirez, who arrived at the pueblo alone and on foot. Fray Ramirez built a church, taught the Acoma Spanish, baptized many of them and persuaded them to build a trail to the summit that horses could ascend. (Terrell, p. 264)

Since the early Spanish efforts to subdue and Christianize them, the Acoma people have, of course, been affected by European, and later, American cultural influences. However, their isolated place on their mesa has, at the same time, enabled them and influenced them to retain many of their traditions, and pride in their culture and identity as a people.

Simon J. Ortiz writes out of a history, tradition and way of life that is even more firmly rooted in place than those of N. Scott Momaday, Carter Revard and most other contemporary American Indian poets. Ortiz has said, "I write about Indians mainly because I am Indian and do not feel apart from my people. In fact . . . it would not be possible for me to write as an individual but only as part of a people."[2]

There is little specific biographical information available about Ortiz. At the same time, because his fiction and poetry come so much from his own experience, the reader comes

to feel close to him. Ortiz does not hide behind his writing. It is an expression. The best autobiography I have found is at the end of The Man to Send Rainclouds. This excerpt reveals the close relationship that exists between Ortiz's writing and his life:

> Language is a way of life. I do not wish to regard language merely as a mechanically functional tool, but as a way of life which is a path, a trail which I follow in order to be aware as much as possible of what is around me and what part I am in that life.
>
> I never decided to become a poet. An old-man relative with a humpback used to come to our home when I was a child, and he would carry me on his back. He told stories. My mother has told me that. That contact must have contributed the language of myself.
>
> The way I try to do it with my poetry, my stories, my verbal telling is: realize the obligation that is important, that the language of a person is a road from inside himself to the outside and from that outside of himself to inside. It is always a continuing motion, never ending.
>
> I've been a journalist, teacher, for a very short time baker's helper, clerk, soldier in the U.S. Army, college student, laborer, public relations director, and other things. I am mainly writing now, using that language, and giving readings and lectures.
>
> I write for myself, my parents, my wife and children, for my community of kinfolk, that way of life. I must do that to ensure that I have a good journey on my way back home and in order that it will continue that way.[3]

When language is "a way of life," language is more than its sound. It is part of the world of experience. It is tangible to the mind and senses as the environment is touched by and touches the senses and mind. In thinking of language as a "road from inside of himself to the outside, and from outside of himself to inside," Ortiz describes the process of communication as cyclic, like life in the natural world.

Ortiz's variety of occupations has enabled him to make contact with many different kinds of people. His varied experiences in work and travel enrich and extend his poetry, enabling him to express in language a great variety of relationships.

Ortiz's poems were first published in John R. Milton's anthology, The American Indian Speaks, in 1969. Ortiz had just spent a year in the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa. Milton's anthology includes four of Ortiz's poems and a short story, "Woman Singing." "This Preparation," one of the poems, is a good place to begin a study of the spirit of place in the poetry of Simon Ortiz:

> these sticks i am holding
> i cut down at the creek.
> i have just come from there.
> i listened to the creek
> speaking to the world,
> i did my praying,
> and then i took my knife
> and cut the sticks.
> there is some sorrow in leaving
> fresh wounds in growing things,
> but my praying has relieved
> some of my sorrow. prayers
> make things possible, my uncle said.
> before i left i listened again
> for words the creek was telling,
> and i smelled its smell which
> are words also. and then
> i tied my sticks into a bundle
> and came home, each step a prayer
> for this morning and a safe return.
> my son is sleeping still
> in his quietness, my wife
> is stirring at her cooking,
> and i am making this preparation.
> i wish to make my praying
> into these sticks like gods have taught. (p. 7)

The poem is a preparation for prayer. Ortiz enters into the preparation personally. The poem expresses a personal reverence for the creation. Ortiz speaks his feelings and attitudes regarding the place where he "listened to the creek/speaking to the world." Aware of the place, he hears the creek communicate by its sound, as if it were speaking. He cuts prayer sticks and feels "sorrow in leaving/ fresh wounds in growing things." Such a feeling requires an ability of the imagination to transcend individual consciousness and to commune with nature. Ortiz knows and feels his relationship to the creek and the sticks. To say "i smelled its smell which/ are words also" is to say that the smell communicates. The smell of the creek may communicate with more strength than words what the creation is.

In cutting the prayer sticks and preparing to pray into them, Ortiz is participating in a traditional ceremony of the Acoma people. According to the origin story of the Acoma, Iatiku, one of the first two original human beings, both of whom were female, taught her children to pray to the spirits of the four seasons, using certain prayers and prayer sticks. Iatiku also made prayer sticks for each kind of <u>katsina</u> or spirit made manifest by masked dancers. Then she taught the people prayers and how to make prayer sticks.[4] By participating in "This Preparation," Ortiz affirms the religious attitude of his people, his reverence for the earth, and the belief that "prayers/ make things possible."

Such a belief accepts and expresses the power of words to affect desired results. Such an attitude expresses belief in a reciprocal relationship between people and nature; and as explained in chapter one, this attitude is traditional among American Indians.

Another ceremonial poem in The American Indian Speaks is "Smoking My Prayers":

> now that i have lighted my smoke
> i am motioning to the east
> i am walking in thought that direction
> i am listening for your voices
> i am occurring in my mind
> this instance that i am here
> now that i have breathed inwards
> i am seeing the mountains east
> i am travelling to that place of birth
> i am aware of your voices
> i am thinking of your relationship with me
> this time in the morning that we are together
> now that i have breathed outwards
> i am letting you take my breath
> i am moving for your sake
> i am hearing the voices of your children
> i am not myself but yourself now
> at this time your spirit has captured mine
> now that i am taking breath in again
> i have arrived back from that place of birth
> i have travelled fast and surely
> i have heard what you wanted me to hear
> i have become whole and strong with yourself
> this morning i am living with your breath.
>
> (p. 8)

Like "This Preparation," "Smoking My Prayers" is personal in the way it expresses prayer. It is an account of the symbolic meaning of smoking, inhaling breath that represents the spirit and life and exhaling breath that returns to the atmosphere that is our medium of existence. Ortiz motions toward the east, walks in that direction, and listens for

voices of gods. The poem is a pure expression of the spirit of place at its most primal level. In the creation story of the Acoma, Tsichtinako (Thought-Woman) instructed the people to plant tobacco. She taught them how to roll the tobacco leaves in corn husks and how to smoke it. The people smoke in order to make their prayers "merge into the minds of the gods to whom the prayer is addressed."[5] Ortiz expresses this experience in the last seven lines of his poem, ending, "i have become whole and strong with yourself/ this morning i am living with your breath." In this direct expression of the experience of smoking his prayers, Ortiz expresses the fullness of being instilled with the spirit of place. Gary Snyder explains this attitude in his book, The Old Ways:

> . . . inhabitory peoples sometimes say, 'this piece of land is sacred'--or 'all the land is sacred.' This is an attitude that draws on awareness of the mystery of life and death; of taking life to live; of giving life back--not only to your own children but to the life of the whole land.[6]

Nothing about our place is more essential to life than the air we breathe. And smoking symbolizes the process of taking and giving life. In "Smoking My Prayers" Ortiz has written a chant to embody his participation in and acknowledgment of the sacred relationship between himself and all life.

The four poems in The American Indian Speaks illustrate the variety in Ortiz's poetry. Whereas "This Preparation" and "Smoking My Prayers" are ceremonial poems that have flowed out of the oral tradition and that could have been

written a hundred years ago, since they make no mention of the changes in the lives of American Indians that have resulted from the Anglo-European settlement, the other two poems, "Ten O'Clock News" and "Irish Poets on Saturday and an Indian," are modern in their cultural references:

TEN O'CLOCK NEWS

berstein disc jockey
telling about indians
on ten o'clock news
o they have been screwed
i know everybody's talking
about indians yesterday
murdering conquest the buffalo
in those hills in kansas
railroad hustling progress
today maybe tomorrow in
ghost dance dreams we'll
find out berstein doesn't know
what indians say these days
in wino translations
he doesn't know that and even
indians sometimes don't know
because they believe in trains
and what berstein tells them
on ten o'clock news
(p. 5)

"Ten O'Clock News" is a commentary about non-Indians commenting on the injustices done to American Indians. The poem shows that such accounts are likely to be superficial, since the commentator, in this case a newscaster, often has only a superficial knowledge of the information he conveys. Ortiz ends the poem by acknowledging the pervasive influence of the communications media on Indians. It is easier to idealize Indians of the past than it is to come to know American Indians of the present. Ortiz's poem points out the

naiveté of generalizations that do not take full realities into account. Of course, the message of the poem goes beyond Indian life. What is reported on the ten o'clock news is only partial news. It is easier for people to passively believe in what they hear on the news than it is for them to think for themselves; therefore, many people rely on the ten o'clock news, rather than direct experience for their knowledge of themselves and their relationship to the place and culture where they live. Unless the poet includes the disc jockey or other elements of modern culture, the poet falsifies the environment and people in his poetry. It is to Ortiz's credit that he writes of the present-day realities of the lives of American Indians.

In "Irish Poets on Saturday and an Indian," Ortiz again writes of modern life:

> irish poets on saturday, drinking
> we bought each others' drinks,
> talk about poetry, james welch,
> blackfoot from montana, good poet,
> that indian chasing buffalo through words,
> making prayers in literary journals,
> yes strange world now, drinking bourbon
> and waters and then beers, tony
> one irish poet and his wife a blonde
> who i see must have been a beauty,
> and sydney the other irish poet,
> who laughs at a name tony says,
> murphy many horses, laughing irish indian,
> we laugh at the good sound of laughter,
> and then i tell about the unseen translation
> where indians have backed up into
> and on long liquor nights, working
> in their minds the anger and madness
> will come forth in tongues and fury.
>
> (p. 6)

The life of a contemporary American Indian poet is full of

ironic contradictions. Now that the buffalo are gone, "james welch/ blackfoot from montana, good poet" must chase "buffalo through words." Parallel to the idea of "chasing buffalo through words" is "making prayers in literary journals"; that is what Ortiz did in having "This Preparation" and "Smoking My Prayers" published. It is a "strange world now," but it is better to publish prayers that recognize people's relationship to the creation than to hold on to them. Writing is a kind of sharing.

It is significant that Ortiz named James Welch in his poem. "Irish Poets on Saturday and an Indian" bears a strong resemblance to the final stanza of Welch's poem, "Blackfeet, Blood and Piegan Hunters":

> Comfortable we drink and string together stories
> of white buffalo, medicine men who promised
> and delivered horrible cures for hunger,
> lovely tales of war and white men massacres.
> Meaning gone, we dance for pennies now,
> our feet jangling dust that hides the bones
> of sainted Indians. Look away and we are gone.
> Look back. Tracks are there, a little faint,
> our song strong enough for headstrong hunters
> who look ahead to one more kill.[7]

The violence that ends Welch's poem is echoed in the final lines of "Irish Poets on Saturday and an Indian," which are the heart of Ortiz's poem. They contain the insight and hurt that the liquor let be translated into words. With words the contemporary American Indian poet expresses the anger rising in the minds of people who are apart from their homes, ways of life and traditions, cut off from their Mother and the spirit of place. As Ortiz powerfully expresses it,

"the anger and madness/ will come forth in tongues and fury."

After Ortiz's poems were published in The American Indian Speaks, they appeared in a number of poetry magazines, such as Dacotah Territory, Greenfield Review, Pembroke Magazine, and The Indian Historian and in anthologies such as Witt and Steiner's The Way, Faderman and Bradshaw's Speaking for Ourselves, Niatum's Carriers of the Dream Wheel, Allen's The Whispering Wind and McCulloughs' Voices from Waḥ kon-tah.

In 1972, his poem, "Relocation," was published in Shirley Hill Witt and Stan Steinger's The Way: An Anthology of American Indian Literature. "Relocation" illustrates Ortiz's power in writing poetry made of words spoken out of deep emotion:

> don't talk to me no words
> don't frighten me
> for i am in the blinding city
> the lights
> the cars
> the deadened glares
> tear my heart
> & close my mind
>
> who questions my pain
> the tight knot of anger
> in my breast
> I swallow hard and often
> and taste my spit
> and it does not taste good
> who questions my mind
>
> i came here because i was tired
> the BIA taught me to cleanse myself
> daily to keep a careful account of my time
> efficiency was learned in catechism
> the sisters spelled me god in white
> and i came here to feed myself

corn & potatoes and chili and mutton
did not nourish me it was said
so i agreed to move
i see me walking in sleep
down streets down streets grey with cement
and glaring glass and oily wind
armed with a pint of wine
i cheated my children to buy
i am ashamed
i am tired
i am hungry
i speak words
i am lonely for hills
i am lonely for myself[8]

Like many other young people in America, young Indians often leave their rural homes to find jobs in cities. City life can be lonely and alienating for non-Indian or Indian. But "Relocation" is a distinctly Indian poem. The relocation program has been a policy of the Bureau of Indian Affairs to get Indians off reservations into the mainstream of American life. The relocation program was so successful that by the 1970s, half of the American Indians lived in cities.[9] Of course, by that time pollution, overcrowding, crime and other undesirable facts of city life had become evident to white city dwellers, who were increasingly escaping the city for more peaceful and healthful country life.

Simon Ortiz's poem, "Relocation," dramatically expresses the effect of the relocation program from the point of view of an American Indian who was the victim of that program. Ortiz writes short fiction in addition to poetry. And his short stories often complement his poetry in their themes. His story, "The San Francisco Indians," is also about relocation. In the story a grandfather goes to Oakland

to find his granddaughter, who went there to learn to be a secretary. Her family has not heard from her for several months. The man does not find his granddaughter. He is befriended by some young city Indians who have some recordings of Indian chants and some peyote buttons that they want to share with him. But the old Indian chooses not to stay with them. The recorded songs and peyote buttons are not part of his religious feelings, which run deeper and are associated with his culture and home; and lonesome for home, he goes back.[10] He has realized quickly that the young San Francisco Indians need more than songs and prayers. They need to get out of the city, back to the earth. "The San Francisco Indians," which is written from a detached point of view, provides an outside view of the city which is affecting the emotions of the man speaking subjectively and emotionally in "Relocation."

In Ortiz's poem, the city is "blinding" with its electric lights and dead with its buildings and streets, a clutter of dead objects. Such an atmosphere makes the Indian retreat inside himself. His "knot of anger" has arisen from the frustration and loneliness of living in a place where he cannot find fulfillment. In the city, where the air is not fresh, his spit "does not taste good."

The Indian has been victimized by the U.S. Government's attempt to deculturize him. The BIA, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, has been the government's agent in the attempt to

make American Indians change from Indian to white ways. The Indian has been taught such things as when to bathe, how to organize his time, what kind of god to believe in, and what kind of food to eat. White ways have been presented to him as being superior to his traditional Indian ways.

But ironically, though the Indian has come to the city to feed himself, he has starved. City life has not nourished him; it has cheated him out of life. He walks the streets of the city in desperation. In the city he escapes from his pain through "a pint of wine." The victim of relocation victimizes his own children by drinking, rather than providing for them.

The relocated Indian, who has given in to the government's attempts to destroy his Indian identity, has lost his self. He says at the end of the poem, "i am lonely for hills/ i am lonely for myself."

The form in which Ortiz first wrote "Relocation" seems right for the statement of the poem. There is no capitalization, except for BIA. This is appropriate since the Bureau of Indian Affairs has dominated the lives of American Indians in administering payments and programs to them. The BIA has represented U.S. Government interests, rather than the needs of people like the speaker in "Relocation." The lower case i symbolizes the inferiority the speaker has come to feel. The lack of punctuation and the particularly Indian colloquial word structure of the poem make the expression

seem appropriate for an American Indian who has had a minimal education in a mission school. Ortiz revised "Relocation" when he made it part of his book, Going For the Rain. He capitalized letters at the beginnings of sentences and all the I's in the poem. "Relocation" is a powerful poem in either style, but its original form seems to better fit the substance of the poem.

Going For the Rain, published by Harper and Row in 1976, is the best collection of Ortiz's poetry. It contains many poems like "Relocation" and "Missing That Indian Name of Roy or Ray" which were earlier published in magazines and anthologies. The book has four parts: "Preparation," "Leaving," "Returning," and "The Rain Falls." The book is cyclic. In the "Prologue," Ortiz begins with a traditional song:

> Let us go again, brother; let us go for the shiwana.
> Let us make our prayer songs.
> We will go now. Now we are going.
> We will bring back the shiwana.
> They are coming now. Now, they are coming.
> It is flowing. The plants are growing.
> Let us go again, brother; let us go for the shiwana.[11]

The song has the same structure as Ortiz's book. In four separate paragraphs following the poem, Ortiz explains the significance of these four things--"A man makes his prayers," "A man leaves," "A man returns," and "The rain comes and falls"--to his life and to all life. The prologue is a paraphrase of the book, which is a ceremony, describing the ceremonial act that living can be. Because Going For the Rain is a cyclic book, the best way to come to a

critical understanding of it is to consider the poems in sequence.

The first poem in "Preparation" is "The Creation According to Coyote." The poem seems to be a retelling of a story Ortiz had heard his uncle tell:

> "First of all, it's all true."
> Coyote, he says this, this way,
> humble yourself, motioning and meaning
> what he says.
>
> You were born when you came
> from that body, the earth;
> your black head burst from granite,
> the ashes cooling,
>
> until it began to rain.
> It turned muddy then,
> and then green and brown things
> came without legs.
>
> They looked strange.
> Everything was strange.
> There was nothing to know then,
>
> until later, Coyote told me this,
> and he was b.s.-ing probably,
> two sons were born,
> Uyuyayeh and Masaweh.
>
> They were young then,
> and then later on they were older.
>
> And then the people were wondering
> what was above.
> They had heard rumors.
>
> But, you know, Coyote,
> he was mainly bragging
> when he said (I think),
> "My brothers, the Twins then said,
> 'Let's lead these poor creatures
> and save them.'"
>
> And later on, they came to light
> after many exciting and colorful

and tragic things of adventure;
and this is the life, all these, all these.

My uncle told me all this, that time.
Coyote told me too, but you know
how he is, always talking to the gods,
the mountains, the stone all around.

And you know, I believe him.
(pp. 3-4)

This account of the creation story is interesting in itself and in the way it is told. The coyote is a trickster and a transformer. Ortiz jokingly casts some doubt on what the coyote said, but he ends his poem, "And you know, I believe him." Ortiz's manner of narration captures the colloquial, light-hearted manner in which traditional stories tell of the clever, mischievous coyote, who befriended the original humans.

The creation story the coyote told is different in some ways from the Acoma creation story that was recorded by Matthew W. Stirling. In the account recorded by Stirling, the focus was on two sisters, while the coyote's account is of two brothers. But the creation stories have basic similarities. In both stories, people were born from the earth. Ortiz's creation poem asserts the basic truth of the coyote's origin story.

Ortiz states from the first his belief in the oral tradition of his people. The creation poem explains the Acoma people's relation to the earth, that they were born out of her body. And it affirms the worth of "talking to the gods,/

the mountains, the stone all around," relating to and communicating with one's place.

Ortiz acknowledges the truth in his people's identity and awareness by teaching his son the Acoma way:

FOUR POEMS FOR A CHILD SON

December 18, 1972

"What's Your Indian Name?"

It has to do with full moments
of mountains, deserts, sun, gods,
song, completeness.

It has to do with stories, legends
full of heroes and travelling.
It has to do with rebirth and growing
and being strong and seeing.

You see it's like this (the movement):
go to the water
and gather the straight willow stems
bring them home
work carefully at forming them
tie on the feathers
paint them with the earth
feed them and talk with them
pray.

You see, son, the eagle is a whole person
the way it lives; it means it has to do
with paying attention to where it is,
not the center of the earth especially
but part of it, one part among all parts,
and that's only the beginning.

(p. 7)

The first poem, "'What's Your Indian Name?,'" explains something of what it means to have an Indian identity. Place is an essential part of this identity. Realizing the completeness of the creation involves the ceremonial act which recognizes one's part "among all parts." The "straight willow

stems" are also part of the living completeness of the earth. In talking with them, the son can affirm his relationship to them as part of the same completeness. An Indian name generally identifies the person metaphorically as a part "among all parts." Ortiz tells his son to live acknowledging this, realizing that the name is "only the beginning" and that there is no end to understanding the completeness and cyclic nature of life.

The second poem, "It was the Third Day, July 12, 1971," seems to have arisen in Ortiz's thoughts after hearing his son say "'Look Dad'" in his memory:

IT WAS THE THIRD DAY, JULY 12, 1971

Hitch-hiking on the way to Colorado,
I heard your voice, "Look, Dad . . ."
A hawk
sweeping its wings
clear

through the whole sky

the blue
the slow wind
fresh with the smell of summer alfalfa
at the foot of the Jemez Mountains.

(You see, the gods come during the summer
for four days amongst the people,
bring gifts, bring hope and life,
you can see them I mean.)

Waiting for my next ride,
I sang,
Look, the plants with bells.
Look, the stones with voices.
(p. 8)

In the poem, Ortiz follows the description of a hawk and "the slow wind/ fresh with the smell of summer alfalfa" with

telling his son about the gods, the katsinas, that come during the summer and "bring gifts, bring hope and life." Both experiencing nature and experiencing the ceremony make one have a spiritual feeling of wholeness and identity with the earth and people. Ortiz ends this poem saying, "Look, the plants with bells./ Look the stones with voices." Here again Ortiz acknowledges the non-verbal ways in which non-human nature speaks to people.

In the third poem, "Yesterday," Ortiz writes of starlings that "filled up . . . the world":

YESTERDAY

In the late afternoon,
there was suddenly a noise of birds
filling up everything.

This morning in the newspaper
I read about starlings at the Air
Force base.

I guess they were but all I knew
yesterday
was that they filled up the trees,
the utility wires, the sky, the world.

That's all I know.

(p. 8)

Ortiz has seen the starlings as a child, his son, would see them. Ortiz recalls only their noise and the experience of them filling up everything, without calling them a nuisance. He seems to be telling his son to perceive with his senses and to trust his senses and his feelings.

In the fourth poem, "What My Uncle Tony Told My Sister and Me," Ortiz passes on some basic truths:

WHAT MY UNCLE TONY TOLD MY SISTER AND ME

Respect your mother and father.
Respect your brothers and sisters.
Respect your uncles and aunts.
Respect your land, the beginning.
Respect what is taught you.
Respect what you are named.
Respect the gods.
Respect yourself.
Everything that is around you
is part of you.

(p. 9)

In the repetition of "Respect" and in the parallel sentence structure, Uncle Tony's teaching resembles a chant. The final two lines express the concept of the spirit of place. Such respect makes one live to nurture, to preserve and to learn.

In the "Preparation" section Ortiz frequently refers to his son and daughter, his feelings while awaiting their births, and his interest in preparing them for their own life journey. He wants them to be "going for the rain." The "Preparation" section is about Ortiz's appreciation of the place that is his home and the people that he is close to. There is much emphasis in this section on the influence of older relatives on children. Such a poem is "My Father's Song":

Wanting to say things,
I miss my father tonight.
His voice, the slight catch,
the depth from his thin chest,
the tremble of emotion
in something he has just said
to his son, his song:

We planted corn one Spring at Acu--
we planted several times
but this one particular time
I remember the soft damp sand
in my hand.

My father had stopped at one point
to show me an overturned furrow;
the plowshare had unearthed
the burrow nest of a mouse
in the soft moist sand.

Very gently, he scooped tiny pink animals
into the palm of his hand
and told me to touch them.
We took them to the edge
of the field and put them in the shade
of a sand moist clod.

I remember the very softness
of cool and warm sand and tiny alive mice
and my father saying things.
(p. 20)

Ortiz and his father were planting corn. Mice eat corn. But instead of killing the "tiny pink animals," Ortiz's father scooped them up and put them at the edge of the field so that they could live. Ortiz's father taught him to respect and value new life. The memory is of having learned something important about life and its beginnings. The "tiny pink animals" that Ortiz's father told him to touch were babies new born of the creation. Ortiz does not remember what his father said, but that he said things. The poem is effectively written from the child's point of view. The experience of the poem was part of Simon Ortiz's preparation for life. The experience conveys the idea in itself. Respect all creatures of the earth. Take care to protect and value new life.

The poems in "Preparation" are like prayers that illustrate how much Ortiz values his home and also how he and his people value the earth, as in the final poem of this first section of Going For The Rain:

POEM FOR JODY ABOUT LEAVING

I was telling you
about the red cliff faces
of the Lukachukai Mountains--
how it is
going away--
and near Tsegi,
the red and brown land
that is like a strong
and a healthy woman
ready to give birth
to many children,
and you don't ever want to go
but do anyway.
(p. 22)

The Lukachukai Mountains are buttes northwest of Acoma on the Navajo reservation. The red cliffs of the Lukachukai have "faces" like the red people who live near them. And the land near Tsegi is like a woman. Throughout his poetry, Ortiz sees a woman in nature. His love for the land is passionate, but leaving is necessary. Ortiz must leave his home to learn about the world outside. Like the warriors in the legends of his people, Ortiz must have adventures. As Ortiz wrote in his prologue, "His travelling is a prayer as well, and he must keep on". (p. xiii)

The first poem in "The Second: Leaving" is "Towards Spider Springs." The poem explains the necessity of leaving:

I was amazed
at the wall of stones
by the roadside.

Our baby, his mother,
and I were trying to find
the right road,
but all we found
were ones deeply rutted
and high centered.
We were trying to find
a place to start all over
but couldn't.

On the way back,
we passed by the
stone walls again.
The stones had no mortar;
they were just stones
balancing against the sky.
(p. 25)

The leaving is not only for self awareness and self education; it is necessary because his relationship with his wife has become stagnant. His family could not find a place to start over. A marriage relationship that has become deeply rutted, ingrown, will not allow growth. The leaving is necessary so that the two may each be free to find their right roads. The stone wall stands in nature without mortar. So must the family stand if each person is to develop. They must each be like the rocks "balancing against the sky," rather than bound together by the mortar of deeply-rutted habit.

"Leaving" is a collection of travel poems. By relating to the places and people outside his home, Ortiz comes to a better understanding of his relationship to the world and to his home. "Many Farms Notes" is a series of thirteen

impressions of the traveler. The notes are varied, as is appropriate to the experience of travel.

Looking at a hawk, Ortiz imagines the bird's consciousness and feelings:

1.

Hawk circles
on wind roads
only he knows
how to follow
to the center.
(p. 26)

The ability and need to commune with non-human animals is certainly not limited to American Indians. However this type of sensitivity to non-human life is an important part of American Indian traditions. The shaman speaks for wild animals and other non-human parts of the creation. And these parts of the creation sing through the shaman. Speaking for non-human nature, the poet takes on the role of the shaman.

By communing with animals in this basic way, a human learns more about existence on the earth. The first of the series of notes accurately describes the hawk's circular flight. No one knows how the hawk knows how to follow to the center. But it is obvious that the hawk does know how. No person can be as free as the hawk circling "on wind roads." But observing the hawk one can imagine that freedom, and respect the power of the hawk in that flight.

The eleventh note is a concise and accurate statement of Ortiz's purpose as a poet:

11.

"What would you say that the main theme
of your poetry is?"
"To put it as simply as possible,
I say it this way: to recognize
the relationships I share with everything."

I would like to know well the path
from just east of Black Mountain
to the gray outcropping of Roof Butte
without having to worry
about the shortest way possible.
(pp. 29-30)

Ortiz's poetry expresses the spirit of place theme as a natural outlook. He acknowledges his own relationship to the place outside himself and to his inner feelings. Feeling the spirit of place, a person is able to go through the barrier separating self from other people and nature.

"Many Farms Notes" expresses the relationships Ortiz has with a hawk, a Tuba City girl, a stranger who tells him "Good lucks," the Chinle Valley, the "L.A. Kid," Bear, the people of Many Farms, goats, sheep, a woman in Gallup and a bus driver.

The poems in the "Leaving" section show the importance of travelling. That is the best way to learn the relationships one shares with everything. Without leaving, one's awareness of self and one's relationships with other places and people will be narrow and limited. In "Leaving" Ortiz's consciousness of other people and places expands.

In "Travels in the South," another poem in the "Leaving" section, Ortiz develops a social consciousness of America through travelling through an area of the United States

that represents extremes of hospitality on the one hand, and racism on the other. The poem has three parts, "East Texas," "The Creek Nation East of the Mississippi," and "Crossing the Georgia Border into Florida." Each of the parts has a title that represents a place where Ortiz felt a relationship between himself and that place:

1. EAST TEXAS

When I left the Alabama-Coushatta people,
it was early morning.
They had treated me kindly, given me food,
spoken me words of welcome, and thanked me.
I touched them, their hands, and promised
I would be back.

When I passed by the Huntsville State Pen
I told the Indian prisoners what the people said
and thanked them and felt very humble.
The sun was rising then.

When I got to Dallas I did not want to be there.
I went to see the BIA Relocation man.
He told me, "I don't know how many Indians
there are in Dallas; they come every week."
I talked with Ray, a Navajo; he didn't have a job,
was looking, and he was a welder.
I saw an Apache woman crying for her lost life.

When it was evening of the next day,
I stopped at a lake called Caddo.
I asked a park ranger, "Who was Caddo?"
And he said it used to be some Indian tribe.

I met two Black women fishing at the lake.
I sat by them; they were good to be with.
They were about seventy years old and laughed,
and for the first and only time in my life
I cut a terrapin's head off because,
as the women said, "They won't let go until sundown."

When it was after sundown in East Texas, I prayed
for strength and the Caddo and the Black women
and my young son at home and Dallas and when
it would be the morning, the sun.

(p. 34)

In the travel sections of his book, Ortiz has written of meeting Indian people. Through being with them he has learned more about his relationship to them. After leaving the Alabama-Coushatta people, who had made him welcome, he passed the Huntsville State Penitentiary and thought of the Indian prisoners there. When he arrived at Dallas, he asked the "BIA Relocation man" how many Indians were living there. The Indians he met in Dallas were like the Indian in "Relocation." The Navajo man was out of work. The woman was "crying for her lost life." Next Ortiz stopped at Caddo Lake and went fishing. The park ranger knew nothing about the Caddo Indians for whom the lake was named, but Ortiz met two Black women who "were good to be with" fishing at the lake. Caddo Lake and the Alabama-Coushatta reservation are in east Texas, and the experiences Ortiz had with the Black women and the Alabama-Coushatta people are the most significant experiences of the first part of the poem. The prayer at the end of the first part of "Travels in the South" shows Ortiz's concern about new people he has become aware of, and at the same time he prays for his own strength, for his son and the sun. The new people have become part of his recognition of the relationships he shares with all things in the world.

The second part of the poem, "The Creek Nation East of the Mississippi," has as its core a visit with Chief Alvin McGee:

2. THE CREEK NATION EAST OF THE MISSISSIPPI

Once, in a story, I wrote that Indians are everywhere.
Goddamn right.

In Pensacola, Florida, some hotdog stand
operator told me about Chief McGee.

"I'm looking for Indians," I said.
"I know Chief Alvin McGee," he said.
I bought a hotdog and a beer.
"He lives near Atmore, Alabama,
cross the tracks, drive by the school,
over the freeway to Atlanta, about a mile.
He lives at the second house on the right."

I called from a payphone in Atmore.
Mr. McGee told me to come on over.
I found his home right away,
and he came out when I stopped in his yard.
He had a big smile on his face.
I'd seen his face before in the history books
when they bothered to put Creeks in them.

He told me about Osceola.
"He was born in this county," Chief McGee said.
He showed me his garden and fields.
"I have seventy acres," he said.
"We used to have our own school,
but they took that away from us.
There ain't much they don't try to take."

We watched the news on TV.
It was election time in Alabama,
George Wallace against something.
People kept coming over to his house,
wanting the Chief's support. "Wallace is the one."
"Brewer is our man." They kept that up all night.
The next morning the election was on,
but I left right after breakfast.

Chief Alvin McGee put his arms around me
and blessed me. I remembered my grandfather,
the mountains, the land from where I came,
and I thanked him for his home, "Keep together,
please don't worry about Wallace, don't worry."

I was on that freeway to Atlanta
when I heard about the killings at Kent State.
I pulled off the road just past a sign which read

NO STOPPING EXCEPT IN CASE OF
EMERGENCY
and hugged a tree.
(pp. 35-36)

The story Ortiz is referring to at the opening of the second part is "The San Francisco Indians," which I discussed earlier with "Relocation." Ortiz follows the statement that "Indians are everywhere" by an example, Chief Alvin McGee, a Creek living in the deep South. Ortiz spends the night at Chief McGee's house. Though Ortiz was a stranger to the Creek man, having only seen Chief McGee's picture in history books, he was welcomed into Mr. McGee's home. And one sees in this example the way and the history American Indians share. One thing that they share is a history of being robbed: "There ain't much they don't try to take." Ortiz remembered his grandfather when Chief Alvin McGee put his arms around him and blessed him. And he remembered his home. Though Ortiz and McGee were from different tribes and different places, they shared in being Indian.

The references to George Wallace's campaign introduce the political realities of the present situation that surrounded Chief Alvin McGee. And the closing remark, spoken by McGee or Ortiz, communicates the concern they feel at the danger of a racist being elected.

In the powerful final stanza, Ortiz reacts in sorrow when he hears about the students being shot at Kent State. His embracing the tree parallels the embrace of Chief Alvin McGee. In the embrace Ortiz seeks some solace, some comfort

and to express his grief to nature. Ortiz is related to Chief McGee and to the students at Kent State and to the tree.

The emergency that made Ortiz stop to hug the tree was an emotional one, rather than the mechanical one that the sign permitted stopping for. Ortiz felt the danger to all natural life on the planet, that was symbolized by the shooting of students protesting the Vietnam War.

Travelling, leaving one's home, is one way for a person to awaken to political, social and personal realities. One becomes self conscious when one feels out of place. In some ways, the third part of "Travels in the South" is similar to Momaday's "Krasnopresnenskaya Station." But Ortiz is not an American Indian travelling in the Soviet Union. He is an American Indian travelling in America. And still, he is made to feel alien, foreign:

3. CROSSING THE GEORGIA BORDER INTO FLORIDA

I worried about my hair, kept my car locked.
They'd look at me, lean, white, nervous,
their lips moving, making wordless gestures.

My hair is past my ears.
My Grandfather wore it like that.
He used to wear a hat, a gray one,
with grease stains on it.
The people called him Tall One
because he was tall for an Acoma.

I had a hard time in Atlanta;
I thought it was because
I did not have a suit and tie.
I had to stay at the Dinkler Plaza,
a classy joint, for an Indian meeting.

The desk clerk didn't believe it
when I walked up, requested a room,
towel rolled up under my arm,
a couple books, and my black bag of poems.
I had to tell him who I really wasn't.
He charged me twenty dollars for a room,
and I figured I'm sure glad
that I'm not a Black man,
and I was sure happy to leave Atlanta.

A few miles from the Florida line,
I picked some flowers beside the highway
and put them with the sage I got in Arizona.
After the Florida line, I went to a State Park,
paid two-fifty, and the park ranger told me,
"This place is noted for the Indians
that don't live here anymore."
He didn't know who they used to be.

When I got to my camping site
and lay on the ground,
a squirrel came by and looked at me.
I moved my eyes. He moved his head.
"Brother," I said.
A red bird came, hopped.
"Brother, how are you?" I asked.
I took some bread, white, and kind of stale,
and scattered some crumbs before them.
They didn't take the crumbs,
and I didn't blame them.

(pp. 36-37)

As the title of the third section indicates, the most important experience of the travel described was getting out of Georgia. In Atlanta, Ortiz felt out of place. Whereas his hair was long in the traditional way, a positive symbol stating his relationship to his grandfather, Ortiz worried about his long hair in a place where "lean, white, nervous" men looked at long hair and Indians with suspicion. Ortiz also felt out of place in Atlanta because he was not wearing a suit and tie. He did not look like the people who frequent the Dinkler Plaza. It is ironic that the Dinkler Plaza was

chosen for an Indian meeting. The world of the Dinkler Plaza is an artificial world, created out of business affluence, removed from nature and natural, unpretentious people like Ortiz. The mood of the poem changes when Ortiz describes himself picking flowers beside the highway. In Atlanta Ortiz and his heritage had been scorned. But back in the natural world his relationship to his surroundings was reaffirmed. He put the flowers with the sage from Arizona, and once in Florida he went to a state park where some Indians once lived. There he lay on the ground and spoke to his "Brothers," the squirrel and the red bird. He had again become a part of a place and been accepted by it. He scattered some white, stale bread crumbs for the animals, but they refused the crumbs. Ortiz understood the animals' refusal of the unnatural food.

In "Travels in the South" as in "Relocation" and other poems in the "Leaving" and "Returning" sections of Going For The Rain, Ortiz has contrasted the city to the natural environment. He was uncomfortable in Dallas because the Indian people he saw there were desperate and out of work. He felt out of place in Atlanta. These cities, built for purposes of business and profit, did not make Ortiz feel at home. Ortiz was refreshed by being with the Alabama-Coushatta people, in the home of Chief Alvin McGee and in the Florida state park, because in those places he was accepted as himself, a man concerned with being rather than appearing, and

with life rather than money and status. But it was important that Ortiz see the cities, that he learn more about the relationship he had to them. Leaving made him more aware of who he was and what he could relate to.

Ortiz's poetry is personal. He allows the reader to follow him as he learns. Learning brings understanding and compassion for others outside his home--for the prisoners at Huntsville State Prison, for the students killed at Kent State, for the Indian lonely in the city, for a woman in Gallup, who stumbled against him "like a stuffed dummy" asking for a drink. The final stanza of "For Those Sisters & Brothers in Gallup" expresses the result of his leaving:

> Be kind, sister, be kind;
> it shall come cleansing again.
> It shall rain and your eyes
> will shine and look so deeply
> into me into me into me into me.
> (p. 51)

The rain cleanses. Nature heals and makes eyes shine. Ortiz has left to expand and extend his spirit. He has brought into his awareness and caring, people and places that enlarge him. The repetition of "into me" illustrates Ortiz's feeling of compassion for the woman. Such feeling penetrates his being as the rain penetrates the earth.

The third section of Going For The Rain, "Returning," is parallel to the second section, "Leaving." Learning results in changes in feeling as well as thinking. A participation in the place of one's existence includes a feeling

of the spirit of people.

First Ortiz gets a feeling for the people who feel alien, lonely and purposeless in cities across America. Then he thinks about the causes, meanings and solutions for this despair. In "Returning" Ortiz shows an increased social and political awareness as a result of his experiences on the road. He comments on technological, capitalist society, using the ancient knowledge of his Acoma people, as in this poem:

WASHYUMA MOTOR HOTEL

Beneath the cement foundations
of the motel, the ancient spirits
of the people conspire sacred tricks.
They tell stories and jokes and laugh
and laugh.

The American passersby
get out of their hot stuffy cars
at evening, pay their money wordlessly,
and fall asleep without benefit of dreams.
The next morning, they get up,
dress automatically, brush their teeth,
get in their cars and drive away.
They haven't noticed that the cement
foundations of the motor hotel
are crumbling, bit by bit.

The ancient spirits tell stories
and jokes and laugh and laugh.
(p. 61)

Returning, Ortiz is aware of the things that endure. The motel, with its cement foundation, is only temporary. It will crumble. The ancient spirits will always endure. The spirits of the place will endure long after the motel has crumbled to ruin. Modern America takes itself seriously as

the greatest nation. But the ancient spirits that know what really lasts joke about the false foundation and notion that exalts the artificial above the natural, the temporary above the permanent. The motel is real estate. The motel is privately owned. But it is only temporary. The motel has been imposed on the earth for the purpose of profit. The people who stop there only to sleep seem dead in their wordlessness and dreamlessness. They do things automatically, like machines, without enjoying their lives. Their investment in the place amounts to only paper money. They have no investment in the landscape, which is why they are temporary and which is why the spirits laugh. The poem is visionary, rather than despairing, as was "Relocation." Ortiz is learning not to despair, but to be patient. Of course, patience is easier for Ortiz, who has his home, Acoma, to return to, than it is for Indians who have no home to return to. Still, by saying that American society is only temporary, Ortiz provides some comfort.

Another poem with a similar theme is "Crossing the Colorado River into Yuma":

> It is almost dusk.
>
> For a long time,
> we've been travelling.
>
> I saw a hawk
> flying low against the sky.
> The horizon was stone.
>
> That was only a while back.

No one owns this river. Wash with it. Drink it.
Water your plants with it. Pray with it.

The evening sun glimmers across the desert.

Colors signal memories
of past journeys.

Sounds filled everything
and overflowed
upon returning.

Now, the river is silent.

The Greyhound bus roars smoothly on the bridge.
The river bed is hot sand.
The willows are last weak vestiges.
Alongside the river bed is a concrete canal.
The liquid in it flows swiftly, directed, and lifeless.

A brown man leans
by the Yuma bus depot wall;
a daze is in his eyes.

He tries and tries
to smell the river.

He leans,
trying to feel welcomed
to his home.

Yuma is a small town.
It abounds with modern Americana,
motels, gas stations, schools, churches, and etc. Where
did they all come from?
Do they really plan for survival this way?

Neon is weak.

Concrete will soon return
to desert.

Be patient, child, be kind
and not bitter.

Prepare for the morning.
Go down to the river bed.
It will let you.

Sing a bit, be patient.
Wait.

(pp. 67-68)

The poem is a series of impressions in the traveler's mind. It begins at a meditative time of day. And the brief thoughts and memories of things briefly seen seem natural to the stream of consciousness. The river is the current that carries the words of the poem. The natural river endures. The first italicized lines of the poem assert the first purpose of the river, to be used by the people as a natural resource. But beside the natural river, a concrete canal has been constructed. Deflected from its natural path, the water flows over lifeless concrete to irrigate crops.

Yuma is now the center of large irrigation districts which have created rich farmland from the desert. Lettuce, citrus fruits, cantaloupes and alfalfa are grown on the large farms. Water softeners, fertilizers and building materials are manufactured near Yuma.

Despite the scanty rainfall (less than ten inches per year), vegetation in the natural, unfarmed areas, is varied. Low shrubs, such as creosote bush and bur sage, are scattered in the basin areas. Cacti are plentiful on the rocky hillsides, including the suguaro. The Yuma tribe, who originally lived in the area, grew corn, squash and pumpkin, and hunted rabbits, mountain sheep and deer. They and other tribes of the region survived by cultivating plants natural to the area. But their lifestyle has been largely obliterated by large-scale farming.

Ortiz implies that the man leaning "by the Yuma bus depot wall" is dazed because he cannot smell the river. It is hard for the brown man to feel at one with a place like Yuma that now abounds with "modern Americana." Ortiz attempts to soothe the man, saying that "Concrete will soon return/ to desert." Ortiz says that the way to survive is to remain in touch with the spirit of the place, to "Go down to the river bed." The way to survive is to have respect for the original creation and to live in a reciprocal relationship with it.

But the attitude of patience will provide only temporary comfort. The brown man might feel better standing by the river bed than he does standing by the bus station, but if he has lost his self respect because of being unable to find satisfying work in Yuma, and if he has a daze in his eyes because he is drunk, he needs more than the solace provided by the river bed. The solution offered by Ortiz seems too simple, but a poem cannot provide all answers. "Crossing the Colorado River into Yuma" gets at the root of the brown man's alienation, but going down to the river bed is only one step the man must take in finding himself, in becoming whole again.

Again in "The Significance of a Veteran's Day" Ortiz speaks as an Indian and for Indians:

> I happen to be a veteran
> but you can't tell in how many ways
> unless I tell you.

A cold morning waking up on concrete;
I never knew that feeling before,
calling for significance,
and no one answered.

Let me explain it this way
so that you may not go away
without knowing a part of me:

that I am a veteran of at least 30,000 years
when I travelled with the monumental yearning
of glaciers, relieving myself by them,
growing, my children seeking shelter
by the roots of pines and mountains.

When it was that time to build,
my grandfather said, "We cut stone and mixed mud
and ate beans and squash and sang
while we moved ourselves. That's what we did."
And I believe him.

And then later on in the ancient and deep story
of all our nights, we contemplated,
contemplated not the completion of our age,
but the continuance of the universe,
the travelling, not the progress,
but the humility of our being there.

Caught now, in the midst of wars
against foreign disease, missionaries,
canned food, Dick & Jane textbooks, IBM cards,
Western philosophies, General Electric,
I am talking about how we have been able
to survive insignificance.

(p. 72)

Again in this poem American Indian life and history are contrasted to modern Americana. Ortiz returns because he recognizes the value of his culture. He wants to return to it. He values it more after comparing it with non-Indian culture.

Veteran's Day is a holiday to honor the men who have fought in wars engaged in by the U.S. military. Many Indians celebrate Veteran's Day because many American Indians have fought in the U.S. military. But compared to the 30,000 year

span during which American Indians have fought, the 200 years celebrated on Veteran's Day seem insignificant. The American Indians were on this continent during the glacial epoch. Their way of life evolved as the land evolved. They made use of natural materials, ate the natural vegetables of the land and sang. They were not forced to move as they have been for the past four centuries. Except for tribal rivalries, which uprooted tribes infrequently, tribes moved when and where they wished, according to their needs.

The Indians' contemplation of the universe in its vastness made them feel humble. They contemplated the "continuance of the universe" rather than their own "progress." These things were expressed in their oral literature. Their vision extended beyond their own personal material comforts to the relationships that exist in all the cosmos. The old way of life has struggled against countless efforts to destroy it. Wars have been the most devastating and obvious destroyers of Indian people, but "foreign diseases," such as smallpox and cancer, and "missionaries,/ canned food, Dick & Jane textbooks, IBM cards,/ Western philosophies, General Electric" have also been purveyers of Indian genocide.

The manifestations of capitalist/technological society that Ortiz names in the poem, such as the Dick and Jane textbooks, have presented western civilization as being superior to Native American civilization. How can Indians feel significant in American society if American Indian children see

American Indians presented as historical savages, noble or otherwise, or if they do not see them at all, but only Dick and Jane, in their textbooks. Indians have been educated in missions and public schools to give up their "primitive" lifestyle and to take up modern ways of life.

Irony pervades Ortiz's statement about Veteran's Day. His poem defines "significance" and "veteran" from a traditional American Indian's viewpoint, and those two words take on a fuller meaning than they have when they are considered only as they are used in modern American society. The final two lines of the poem simply state the theme of the poem--that the Indian "waking up on concrete" is the true veteran of America, the veteran who deserves to be honored. Indians have been aware of their own insignificance for a long time. Before the vastness of the creation, each person is small and should feel awe and humility and gratitude for life. The things that seem insignificant when one contemplates the continuance of the universe are the manifestations of Western culture that Ortiz mentions. In the poem Ortiz expresses what a historical sense and spirit of place means.

Ortiz returns to his home, to the place and people he most identifies with. The completed journey takes him to his wife, Joy. This intimate poem is at the end of "Returning":

WATCHING YOU

For Joy

I watch you
from the gentle slope
where it is warm
by your shoulder.
My eyes are closed.
I can feel the tap
of your blood
against my cheek.
Inside my mind,
I see the gentle move
ment of your valleys,
the undulations
of slow turnings.
Opening my eyes,
there is a soft dark
and beautiful butte
moving up and then down
as you breathe.
There are fine
and very tiny ferns
growing, and I can
make them move
by breathing.
I watch you with my skin
moving upon yours,
and I have known you well.
(p. 81)

Ortiz is close to the reader. Reading his poems one feels a closeness to him. This sensitive, descriptive poem is effective in its personal origin and its metaphors. The "valleys" and "undulations," the "soft dark/ and beautiful butte," the "very tiny ferns" relate the woman to the land that Ortiz did not want to leave. He has returned and senses the full living reality and beauty of this woman and the land.

The purpose of the journey was to bring back the shiwana, the rain. The fourth section, "The Rain Falls,"

completes the cyclic journey of the book. And many of the poems in this section are parallel to those in "Preparation." The first poem in the fourth section is "Earth Woman":

EARTH WOMAN

for Joy

This woman has been shaping
mountains
millions of years and still
her volcanoes erupt
with continuous mysteries.

How gentle
her movements, her hands,
soft wind,
warm rain,
the moving pain
of pleasure

we share.

(p. 85)

"Earth Woman" is a simply stated poem about the process of creativity that the Earth is constantly engaged in. The process is sexual, as is all continuing life. The process is physical and orgasmic--"her volcanoes erupt/ with continuous mysteries." And the gentle, natural changes, wrought by wind and rain, soothe the earth. Feeling love, one has the "moving pain/ of pleasure." We are moved emotionally by the mysterious, creative capacity which allows humans to live and make love and to shape more life and which allows all nature to continue in this.

The statement of "Earthwoman" is similar to that of "Poem for Jody About Leaving" in the first section of the book. Completing the cyclic journey, Ortiz again perceives

the land as a woman. "The Rain Falls" poems reflect the unity of people with their environment. As in the "Preparation" section, the poems in the final section of the book show respect for elders. The old man, Yuusthiwa, has a natural awareness of his relationship to his environment:

YUUSTHIWA

"Whenever people are driving along and stop
to offer Yuusthiwa a ride, he refuses
and says, 'I still have my legs,'"
my father says, saying it like the old man,
a slow careful drawl. And my mother corrects him,
"'While I'm still able to walk.'"
Yuusthiwa has been sick lately;
either something fell on him
or else he got bit by something, she heard.
Apparently, he still gets around though
pretty much because like my father says
one fellow had said, "'That old man,
he's still tom-catting around, visiting.'
You see him in Acomita along the road
or in McCartys." I chuckle at the expression
picturing the old guy in mind; after all,
Yuusthiwa is only 114 years old at last count.

"One time, David and I were coming
from Acomita," my father says, "and we stopped
for him. Recognizing me, he got in and said
'Ahku Tsai-rrhlai kudha." And as we drove
westwards up this way, he told us things.
I had asked him, "Naishtiya, how do you come
to live as many years as you have, to be so fortunate
as to mature as healthy and firm as you are?'
And he said, "If you live enjoying and appreciating
your life, taking care of yourself, caring for
and being friendly with others; if you use the plants
that grow around here, seeing and knowing
that they are of use, boiling them into medicine
to use in the right way in caring for yourself,
cleansing and helping your body with them;
that's the way I have lived.' That's the way
he said it," my father says.

(p. 101)

The respect American Indians feel for elders is not based just on the fact of their age, but more importantly on their strength of body and mind. Yuusthiwa has lived to such an old age because he has continued to walk. He has continued to exercise his legs, instead of just sitting back and riding in a car. When Ortiz's father asked Yuusthiwa how he came to live so many years and to remain so physically strong, Yuusthiwa answered by explaining what a full life meant to him. There was nothing in his answer about making a lot of money or rising in social status. To Yuusthiwa, enjoying and appreciating life meant knowing and caring for himself, "caring for and being friendly with others," "using the plants" growing in his place for medicine to keep his body healthy. Yuusthiwa, the old man, has lived in harmony with the natural environment and people around him. The completeness of Yuusthiwa's life symbolizes the same completeness that the rain symbolizes in the life cycle.

In "The Rain Falls" the people wait for rain. The rain falls in one poem, "Four Rains." The poem is dedicated to Rainy Dawn, Ortiz's daughter, who as a new person, symbolizes the rain that brings life to the place:

First Rain

She looks at me
so brighteyed I can
see
so far
the mountains shining
when light slants

through rain
into roots
so delicate
they will probably last
always last.

Second Rain

Voice
begins this way,
pointing things out.
I know that you will
listen for sounds
only you will
understand
the way they mean
to me.

Third Rain

Brighteyed flash,
the tiniest mirrored
dreams reaching back
into granite who know
magic and mysteries;
there they are.
There.

Fourth Rain

Don't misunderstand me,
Shiwana.
She's my daughter.
I know what she's saying.
I know her name;
I know.
(pp. 107-108)

Though it seems at first a contradiction, delicate roots are at the same time strong. They can absorb the rain. They have the greatest need to survive. Rainy Dawn is like the delicate roots; young and brighteyed, she is like the rain falling. Light shines through the rain and in her eyes.

The imagery in "First Rain" is visual.

In "Second Rain" the imagery is auditory. The child begins to speak, naming the things around her. The first speech of the child is a delight to those around her, new like the sound of the rain.

In "Third Rain," Ortiz writes of his daughter in relation to the earth. "Third Rain" begins with a "Brighteyed flash" that seems descriptive of Rainy Dawn, but the poem is largely about the knowledge accumulated over the ages by people "reaching back/ into granite," their origin. The "magic and mysteries" of nature are in granite, the rain and the child.

In "Fourth Rain" Ortiz speaks to the Shiwana. In case he has been too abstract, Ortiz comes back to his daughter, Rainy Dawn. She is the present symbol of the rain, but since the complete meaning of the rain cannot be spoken, but only known, Ortiz ends, "I know." The final section of the book, like the first section, contains several poems about Ortiz's children. They represent new beginnings as the cycle of life continues.

Because it describes a cyclical journey, the book Going For The Rain does not end in finality. Several poems in "The Rain Falls" describe the need for the cycle to continue. This time Joy, rather than Simon, will leave:

FOR JOY TO LEAVE UPON

December 28, 1974

Last night a bit before six,
walking from the river,
I saw my shadow by the moonlight.
Broken by the slight rise of a small hill,
ankle-high plants, earth imprints.
Had walked down to the old pear tree,
winter barren, stepped over loosened wire fence.
(Remembered one Autumn early evening
when I killed a flicker for feathers.
Wounded the bird with an airgun,
broke its wing. Flopping running bird
through underbrush, and when I caught it
I had to press its tight neck with my finger
and thumb. The warm struggle of muscle,
feathers, blood upon my skin, its gray eye,
the intense moments of a boy twelve years old.)

Fell once on snow and damp earth,
muscle pulled, sore for a while only though
and now can't tell which shoulder it was
I fell upon, the memory of pain gone.

The reflection of the silver moon
was broken on the river; it was a whipping flag.

The year I got out of the Army,
I tried to see if my grandfather's grapevines
would ever grow again.
I cut the dead vines down to the quick
of the main stem, inches above cluster of roots,
(piled dry gray vines and burned them--
smoke is sweet and acrid) and pulled dirt
in circles around the roots and watered them.
But I left that Summer. Later,
I came back and saw a few green new shoots,
and then I left again.

Tonight, there is a waning moon.

(p. 111)

The poem expresses the hurt that is part of life, such as the leaving of a lover. In the poem Ortiz mentions nothing about an argument, nothing about the actual reason why Joy plans to leave. But he looks back at the past and remembers

killing a flicker for feathers and feeling the bird struggle against being strangled. And he remembers falling and pulling a muscle. He no longer feels the pain in remembering, but remembers that he felt pain at the time.

The "reflection of the silver moon" increases the lonely feeling of his meditative walk. It expresses his mood. The moon appears again at the end of the poem. It is an appropriate feminine symbol that represents Joy's leaving.

Sometimes cutting "the dead vines down to the quick" is necessary, so that they may live again. The pruning Ortiz remembers seems to symbolize the need for a separation to avoid stagnation and death in individual people and their relationship, to allow a chance for new life, new green shoots to develop. The theme of this poem is similar to that of "Towards Spider Springs," the first poem in the "Leaving" section of the book.

A good supplement to the meaning of Going For The Rain is Joy Harjo's poetry. She is the "Joy" in the poems of Simon Ortiz. A Creek poet from Oklahoma, Harjo, like Ortiz, has a strong awareness of place. In her poem "3AM" in which she writes of Ortiz, she thinks of his return to Acoma in relation to her attempt to "find a way back":

3AM
in the albuquerque airport
trying to find a flight
the old oraibi, third mesa
TWA
   is the only desk open

bright lights outline new york,
chicago
and the attendant doesn't know
that third mesa
is a part of the center
of the world
and who are we
just two indians
at three in the morning
trying to find a way back

and then i remembered
that time simon
took a yellow cab
out to acoma from albuquerque
a twenty five dollar ride
to the center of himself

3AM is not too late
to find the way back.[12]

Joy Harjo and Simon Ortiz have strengthened each other's life and writing.

The final poem in Going For The Rain is "It Doesn't End, Of Course." This poem indicates the importance of continuing the journey:

It doesn't end.

In all growing
from all earths
to all skies,

in all touching
all things,

in all soothing
the aches of all years,

it doesn't end.
(p. 112)

The repetition of the first line in the last accentuates formally the statement of this poem. "It" is life. As long as growing, touching and soothing continue, there will

be a continuation of the cycle of life. "The Rain Falls" is a celebration of life. Another preparation will follow, and the conscious journey of life will continue.

Going For The Rain is well conceived, and it is, up to this time, the most substantial and personal volume of contemporary American Indian poetry. Simon J. Ortiz has a well developed sense of who he is and where he is from, and a well developed understanding of his need and the need of all people to relate in spirit to each other and the earth and of how that spiritual communion must be nourished.

The Spirit of Place is a broad concept that cannot be precisely or narrowly defined. But the American Indian poetry studied here provides many insights that lead to a more complete understanding of what the Spirit of Place means. The Spirit of Place is as open-ended as the process of going for the rain because it is related to life, growth and change. The poets I have discussed all write out of traditions that assert the power of words to bring about change. Their poetry is not art for art's sake, but art for life's sake.

American Indian poetry has developed out of a uniquely American history and tradition. As N. Scott Momaday and Simon J. Ortiz have pointed out, the 30,000 year experience of American Indians on the North American continent has enabled them to view their environment and their relationship

to it from a slowly developing and complex perspective. Momaday, Revard and Ortiz are able to express the Spirit of Place so well in their poetry largely because they were reared to know and respect American Indian traditions.

Momaday, Revard and Ortiz carry the Dream Wheels of their people, and in a broader sense, of all of us living on Turtle Island. Indian or non-Indian, if we live on this continent, we cannot escape having a relationship and a responsibility to our place and people, whether we are conscious of it or not.

While the traditional oral literature is part of the outlook of contemporary American Indian poets who see the truth of the traditional literature affirmed in their lives, the tangible environment, the nature that is around them, is also an important influence on their writing. I chose to discuss three southwestern writers both because I live in the Southwest and know this place, and because I found the Spirit of Place theme especially evident in the writing of this region, though not confined to it.

Lance Henson, a Cheyenne poet, has articulated his reason for believing that poetry being written in places like Oklahoma has a special vitality:

> 'The poetry that the coasts are writing is becoming boring and staid. I think the middle part of the country is becoming the center of the most important things that are happening in poetry.'
> 'The reason I'm thinking this way is that you can't live in the world of asphalt and smog and see healthy birds. Sometimes we can still see them here.'[13]

An awareness of the Spirit of Place involves knowing one's relationship to other life. Animals are particularly important to the Spirit of Place theme. People come to understand in inexplicable ways their relationship to the cosmos by watching a hawk as Ortiz described in "Many Farms Notes" and wondering how it knows "to follow to the center," by watching a terrapin as Momaday described in "The Colors of Night" and wondering how it knows when there is going to be a flood, or by watching a meadowlark as Revard described in "Driving in Oklahoma" and wondering how it can fly "so easy" when it sings.

N. Scott Momaday calls the reciprocal relationship that people in the natural order have with the environment "investment" and "appropriation." He says that this relationship is accomplished by "an act of the imagination that is especially ethical in kind."[14]

His poems reveal the importance of the imagination to Kiowa tradition, American Indian cultures in general and himself as an individual. Momaday's best writing is a continuation and development of the oral tradition of his people. His best poems are characterized by the power of his imagination and his precise use of words. However, although as a poetic principle, Momaday considers life to be more important than art, as a poet, he tends to retreat to the beauty and purity of the past, rather than to look at the present lives of American Indians. "The Gourd Dancer,"

Momaday's tribute to his grandfather Mammedaty, is an example.

Most of Momaday's poetry ignores the present-day struggles of American Indians against the continuing efforts to appropriate their lands. Most of his poetry ignores the changes in the environment that have been produced by a capitalist/technological society which has, by destroying many natural places, destroyed much of the Spirit of Place in America.

While Carter Revard's poetry is less concise and less expressive of traditional American Indian life and history than that of Momaday, his poetry, like Momaday's, has developed out of a strong sense of place and identification with nature. Revard seems to believe that vision and the spirit of place are much the same thing, that they are creative acts of the imagination, resulting from immediate, often intuitive responses to environmental stimuli. While Revard's poems recognize the desire to go back in time to a more natural environment, Revard refuses to retreat to the past. He writes of the destruction of much of the original creation which has threatened the Spirit of Place.

The Spirit of Place includes the spirits of the people who have lived in that place. In "Ponca War Dancers" and "After Wounded Knee" Revard writes of leaders of the past, who continue to live in the hearts of their people, and of today's Indian leaders and orators.

To know the Spirit of Place, a person must have a sensitive, personal relationship to the environment and people surrounding him or her. While both Momaday and Revard reveal this close, personal relationship in their poetry, the poetry of Simon J. Ortiz is more intimately personal. To Ortiz, learning these relationships is a continuing process, necessary to his life. Ortiz's life at Acoma has prepared him to be particularly aware of the Spirit of Place. His poetry is a quest for "the meaning that is possible" in life (Going For The Rain, p. vii.).

The Spirit of Place encompasses the historical, social and personal needs to find meaning and unity in life. The three poets I have discussed in detail are only three among many. Roberta Hill, James Welch, Joy Harjo, Ray Young Bear, Leslie Silko, Janet Campbell Hale, Lance Henson and many other American Indian poets are close to the earth in their writing. And so are many non-Indian poets.

In a society that values money and material possessions above everything else, it is hard for the individual to feel that life has any meaning. It is a hollow world without feeling the oneness that is a love for nature and people. And that feeling of oneness that is love is not possible if nature and people are seen in $$.

The Spirit of Place is a first step and a last step. It is a way out of self and back to self. Along the way one learns to pay attention to the highway signs and to the

people who build the new roads. The Spirit of Place is learned by walking and watching and singing and dancing and dreaming and touching and being at the center of the universe.

Chapter I

Notes

[1]This understanding came to me when interviewing writer Leslie Silko on the campus of the Univ. of New Mexico, 22 March 1977.

[2]Gary Snyder, The Old Ways: Six Essays (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1977), p. 12.

[3]Frances Densmore, Music of the Acoma, Isleta, Cochiti and Zuni Pueblos (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Bureau of American Ethnology, 1957; rpt. New York: Decapo Press, 1972), p. 33.

[4]Ruth Murray Underhill, Singing for Power (Berkley: Univ. of California Press, 1938), p. 5.

[5]Margot Astrov, American Indian Prose and Poetry: An Anthology (New York: Capricorn Books, 1962), p. 19.

[6]Astrov, pp. 185-86.

[7]_____, p. 19.

[8]N. Scott Momaday, The Way to Rainy Mountain (Albuquerque: Univ. of New Mexico Press, 1969), p. 33.

[9]Shirley Hill Witt and Stan Steiner, eds., The Way (New York: Vintage Books), p. xxiv.

[10]Witt and Steiner, p. xxvi.

[11]Herbert Joseph Spinden, Songs of the Tewa (New York: Exposition of Indian Tribal Arts, 1933), p. 58.

[12]John R. Milton, ed., The American Indian Speaks (Vermillion: Dakota Press), p. 107.

[13]Underhill, p. 5.

[14]Witt and Steiner, p. xxvi.

[15]S. M. Barrett, Geronimo's Story of His Life (Williamstown, Massachusetts: Corner House Publishers, 1973), pp. 213-16.

[16]Laurence S. Fallis, Geronimo: If I Must Die In Bondage (Marvin, South Dakota: The Blue Cloud Quarterly, 19, No. 3 (1973).

[17]Momaday, p. 16.

[18]_____, p. 8.

[19]N. Scott Momaday, Angle of Geese (Boston: David R. Godine, 1974), p. 26.

[20]Henry David Thoreau, A Week on the Concord and Merrimac Rivers (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1963), p. 44.

[21]Richard Slotkin, Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860 (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1973), pp. 16-17.

[22]Charles A. Beard, An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States (New York: Macmillan, 1968), pp. 144-45.

[23]Wendy Rose, Academic Squaw (Marvin, S.D.: The Blue Cloud Quarterly, Winter, 1977), pp. 17-18.

[24]Kenneth Rosen, ed., Voices of the Rainbow: Contemporary Poetry by American Indians (New York: The Viking Press, 1975), pp. 99-101.

[25]D'Arcy McNickle, They came here first (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1975), pp. vii-viii.

[26]Dee Brown, Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee (New York: Bantam Books, 1970), p. 3.

[27]D. H. Lawrence, Studies in Classic American Literature (New York: The Viking Press, 1964), pp. 35-36.

[28]"A Conversation with N. Scott Momaday," Sun Tracks, 2, No. 2 (1976), p. 19.

[29]Karl and Jane Kopp, eds., Southwest: A Contemporary Anthology (Albuquerque: Red Earth Press, 1977), p. x.

[30]Kopp, p. xi.

Chapter II

Notes

[1]"A Conversation with N. Scott Momaday," Sun Tracks 2, No. 2 (1976), 20-21.

[2]Yvor Winters, The Function of Criticism: Problems and Exercises (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1957), p. 81.

[3]Discussion, The University of Oklahoma, 1 February 1977.

[4]N. Scott Momaday, Angle of Geese (Boston: David R. Godine, 1974), pp. 10-11. Future references to this work will appear in the text.

[5]Howard Kaye, "The Post-Symbolist Poetry of Yvor Winters," The Southern Review, NS 1 (Jan. 1971), 180-81.

[6]N. Scott Momaday, ed., The Complete Poems of Frederick Goddard Tuckerman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. xxvi.

[7]Jim Bross, "Pulitzer-winning writer's work ethnically rooted" (The Norman (Okla.) Transcript, 2 Feb. 1977), 3.

[8]Momaday, The Complete Poems, p. xxiv.

[9]Yvor Winters, Forms of Discovery (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1967), p. 290.

[10]_____, Forms, p. 294.

[11]N. Scott Momaday, The Way to Rainy Mountain (Albuquerque: Univ. of New Mexico Press, 1969), p. 25. Future references to this work will appear in the text.

[12]_____, The Names: A Memoir (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), p. 42.

[13]_____, The Gourd Dancer (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1976), p. 63. Future references to this work will appear in the text.

[14]Wallace Stevens, The Palm at the End of the Mind, ed. Holly Stevens (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), p. 54.

[15]Chuck Woodard. Unpublished interview with N. Scott Momaday (Stanford University, 20 Nov. 1974), p. 6.

[16]Momaday, The Names, p. 169.

[17]_____, The Names, p. 155.

[18]Discussion.

[19]N. Scott Momaday, "A First American Views His Land" National Geographic, 150, No. 1 (1976), 18.

[20]Discussion.

[21]John Fire/ Lame Deer and Richard Erdoes, Lame Deer: Seeker of Visions (New York: Pocket Books, 1972), p. 111.

[22]Momaday, "A First American," 18.

Chapter III

Notes

[1]Jim Bross, "He's product of Oxford, Yale, but Oklahoma is poet's forte," The Norman (Okla.) Transcript (21 Oct. 1976). Future references to this article will appear in the text as "Bross."

[2]Carter Revard, "Merton Gardens," The American Oxonian (Apr. 1961), 79-80.

[3]Interview. The University of Oklahoma (19 Oct. 1976). Future references to this interview will appear in the text as "Interview."

[4]Carter Revard, "Dead of Winter," Grecourt Review, 1, No. 4 (1958).

[5]_____, "The Coyote," The Massachusetts Review, 1, No. 4 (1960), 634. Future references to this issue will appear in the text.

[6]D. H. Lawrence, "Snake," Chief Modern Poets of Britain and America, 1, ed. Gerald De Witt Sanders, et al. (London: The Macmillan Co., 1970), p. 221.

[7]Carter Revard, Letter to Norma Wilson (17 July 1976).

[8]_____, My Right Hand Don't Leave Me No More (St. Louis: EEDIN Press, 1970), p. 27. Future references to this work will appear in the text.

[9]_____, "Support Your Local Police Dog," Voices of the Rainbow: Contemporary Poetry by American Indians, ed. Kenneth Rosen (New York: The Viking Press, 1975), pp. 97-99. Future references to this work will appear in the text as "Voices."

[10]_____, Letter.

[11]Wallace Stevens, The Palm at the End of the Mind, ed. Holly Stevens (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), pp. 5-8. Future references to this poem will appear in the text.

[12]John Wilson Bowyer and John Lee Brooks, eds., The Victorian Age: Prose, Poetry, and Drama (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1954), p. 751.

[13]Revard, Letter.

[14]_____, "Wazhazhe Grandmother," Sun Tracks, 2, No. 2 (1976), 16-17.

[15]Alice Fletcher and Francis La Flesche, The Omaha Tribe (Washington, D.C.: 27th Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, 1905-06), p. 63.

[16]Francis La Flesche, The Osage Tribe Rite of the Chiefs: Sayings of the Ancient Men (Washington, D.C.: 36th Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, 1914-15), p. 48.

[17]Revard, Letter.

[18]_____, "'People From the Stars,'" Unpublished.

[19]_____, "Ponca War Dancers," River Styx, 2 (1977).

[20]_____, "After Wounded Knee: White Bicentennial, Red Millennium," Unpublished.

[21]Robert Anderson, et al., Voices From Wounded Knee, 1973 (Mohawk Nation, via Rooseveltown, N.Y.: Akwesasne Notes, 1976), pp. 2-10. Future references to this book will appear in the text as "Anderson."

[22]"Pine Ridge--1976," Akwesasne Notes, 8, No. 1 (1976), 8.

[23]Deborah Johnson, "On the 'Longest Walk,'" Seven Days (10 Mar. 1978), 7, 34 (As I write about Wounded Knee, Dennis Banks, one of the AIM leaders at the occupation of Wounded Knee and one of those mentioned in Revard's dedication, is a leader of the "Longest Walk." About one hundred people left Sacramento on February 12, 1978, on a walk to Washington, D.C., to dramatize their opposition to eleven anti-Indian bills that are before Congress. The eleven bills would terminate all treaties between the U.S. and the American Indian nations, end all special government programs for American Indians, eliminate reservations, end the Indians' special rights to water, game and fish, destroy any Indian government's jurisdiction over its people and bar suits now pending in the courts from compensating the Indians with land.).

Chapter IV

Notes

[1]John Upton Terrell, Pueblos, Gods and Spaniards (New York: Dial Press, 1973), p. 65. Future references to this work will appear in the text.

[2]John R. Milton, ed., The American Indian Speaks (Vermillion, S.D.: Dakota Press, 1969), p. 193. Future references to this work will appear in the text.

[3]Kenneth Rosen, ed., The Man to Send Rain Clouds: Contemporary Stories By American Indians (New York: Viking Press, 1974), pp. 173-74.

[4]Matthew W. Stirling, Origin Myth of Acoma and Other Records (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 135, 1942), pp. 15-17.

[5]_____, pp. 6-7.

[6]Gary Snyder, The Old Ways (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1977), pp. 59-60.

[7]James Welch, Riding the Earthboy 40 (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), p. 36.

[8]Shirley Hill Witt and Stan Steiner, The Way: An Anthology of American Indian Literature (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), pp. 84-85.

[9]Stan Steiner, "'The White Indians,'" Akwesasne Notes, 8, No. 1 (1976), 38.

[10]Rosen, pp. 9-13.

[11]Simon J. Ortiz, Going For The Rain (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), p. xiii. Future references to this work will appear in the text.

[12]Joy Harjo, the last song (Las Cruces, N.M.: Puerto Del Sol, Chapbook 1, 1975), p. 9.

[13]Nancy Gilson, "Sense of Place Important to Cheyenne Indian Poet," The Oklahoma Journal (29 Apr. 1976), 1A.

[14]N. Scott Momaday, "A First American Views His Land," National Geographic, 150, No. 1 (1976), 18.

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